

*The*  
**Rosicrucian  
Enlightenment**



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Introduced and edited by Ralph White

# The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited



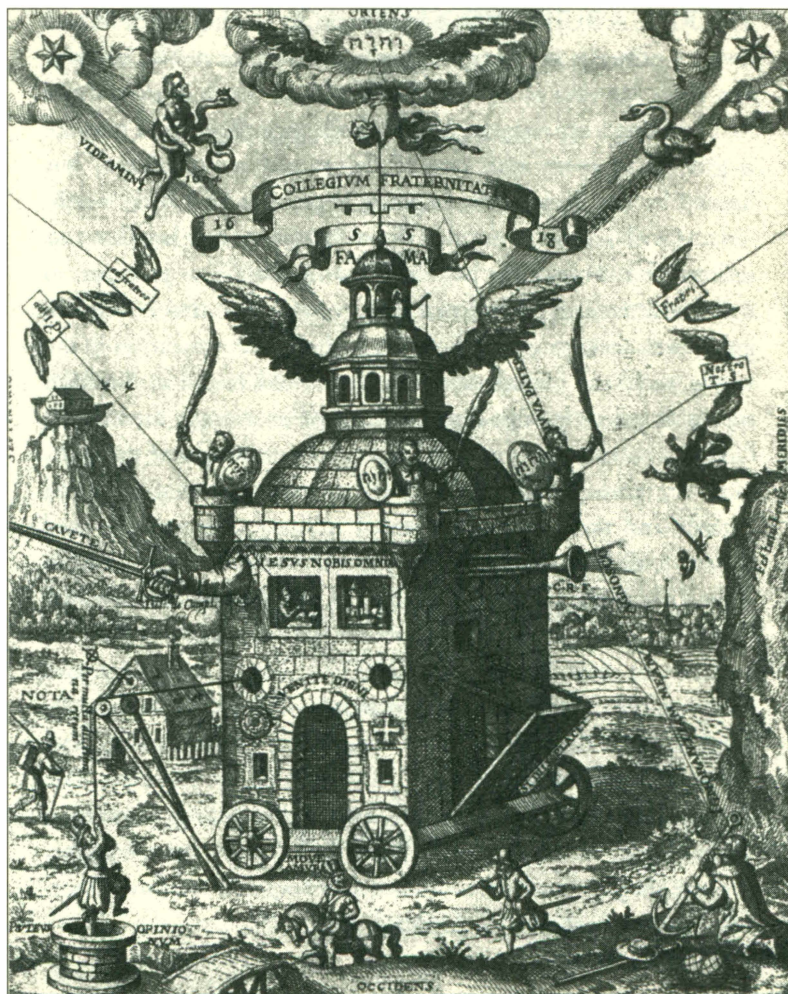
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Introduction by Ralph White



LINDISFARNE BOOKS





*Speculum sophicum rhodo-stauroticum*, 1604  
 “Our Building ... shall remain inaccessible to the godless world.”  
 —the *Fama*





THERE IS A BUILDING, a great building lacking windows and doors, a princely, aye imperial palace, everywhere visible, but hidden from the eyes of men, adorned with all kinds of divine and natural things, the contemplation of which in theory and practice is granted to every man free of charge and remuneration, but heeded by few because the building appears as bad, little worth, old and well-known to mind of the mob who are ever heedless and seekers after things new; but the building itself is so precious, so delicate, artistic and wonderful in its construction that no wealth, gold jewel, money, goods, honour, authority or reputation in the whole world can be named which is not to be found in that high reputable palace in high degree. It is itself so strongly fortified by God and nature, and preserved against the onslaught of the ignorant, that even though all the mines, cannon, battering-rams and petards and such recently invented military devices were used against it all human endeavour and toil would be useless and in vain. This is the Collegium ad S.S. of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, this is the royal, nay more than imperial palace of which the brethren in their "Fama" make mention, herein are hidden and inexpressible costly treasures and riches—let this be sufficiently lucid account thereof. Oh how many men go unknowing and without understanding through all the rooms, all the secret hidden places in this palace, unseeing, uncomprehending, worse than a blind man, or as the saying goes, as a donkey on a bagpipe, because they have not been sufficiently prepared and made worthy. He who hath ears, let him hear.

—Theophilus Schweighardt,  
*Speculum sophericum rhodo-stauroticum*  
("Mirror of Wisdom"), 1618



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# Introduction

by Ralph White

THIS BOOK emerged from two conferences, the first of which was entitled “The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited” and took place September 1995 in the small town of Cesky Krumlov in southern Bohemia, the Czech Republic. The conference was inspired by the beauty and rich alchemical history of the town and by a desire to enter with full imaginative force into the historical period evoked by its atmosphere—The Rosicrucian Enlightenment—named as such by the great Renaissance historian, Frances Yates.<sup>1</sup> That special week of historical and spiritual studies, now etched unforgettably in the minds and hearts of its hundred participants, lives on in these pages. It was a time of magic, esoteric truths, and warm community made possible by a unique collection of circumstances.

The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of communism in Eastern Europe left a huge unexplored territory rich in spiritual tradition, which for fifty years had remained largely neglected by those of us in the West interested in esoteric streams. Cesky Krumlov, during the sixteenth century, was home to the Rozmberk family, known for their interest in alchemical and hermetic matters, and it is an architectural and cultural jewel almost completely unknown to the English-speaking world until recently. When I first stumbled across it in the early 1990s it was entirely

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1. Frances A. Yates, O.B.E., D.Lit (1899–1981), was a Reader of History of the Renaissance at the University of London; a Fellow of the British Academy; a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature; and an Honorary Fellow of the Warburg Institute and of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. She received honorary degrees from the University of Edinburgh, Oxford, East Anglia, and Exeter. She published *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*; *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*; *The Art of Memory*; and *Theatre of the World*. Dr. Yates also won the Wolfson Historical Prize in 1973 for her work on the history of European thought and iconography.



uncommercialized. The tower above the castle, itself rich in the hermetic symbolism of the period, gazed down on this small, sheltered world nestled in the wooded hills of southern Bohemia. Wandering its dimly lit and winding, cobbled streets at night, with the great castle above and the rushing river below, one felt drawn back into the world of the late Renaissance, a time when Count Willem Rozmberk, friend of the emperor Rudolf II and protector of John Dee, welcomed alchemists, hermetic philosophers, and cabbalists to the town and assiduously investigated their insights.

In such an atmosphere, anyone familiar with the writings of Frances Yates would have felt transported into the pages of her books. But there was one of her volumes that especially gripped my imagination: *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.<sup>2</sup> It tells the tragic tale of the Winter King and Queen of Bohemia, Frederick and Elizabeth, who acceded to the throne in 1619 amid a blaze of spiritual and political optimism that was connected, in Yates's view, with the Rosicrucian manifestos. These had appeared in Central Europe a few years earlier, promising a general reform of the world and a new epoch of spiritual wisdom and scientific learning. Unfortunately, the whole enterprise came crashing down within a year following the defeat of the Bohemian army at the Battle of the White Mountain, outside Prague, and amid the systematic suppression by the Counter-Reformation forces of this extraordinary culture. This was a feat of propaganda so effective that it obliterated virtually all awareness of the ideals and aspirations of this time until Yates's brilliant scholarship revived it. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* brought alive a forgotten but essential period in the European history of ideas between the Renaissance and the rise of the modern scientific worldview.

What better place than Cesky Krumlov to revisit imaginatively this mysterious period when a sophisticated and highly enigmatic philosophy held sway for a brief, magical time. This conference would be the first real opportunity for Western scholars and writers to meet and describe their work on this period since Frances Yates's death and to explore the continuing value of the hermetic stream of spiritual knowledge. It would also be a chance for many Czechs to learn about an important part of their history that remains largely unknown within their own country. The defeat at the White Mountain in 1620 meant the loss of Czech independence for three

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2. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.

hundred years and domination by the Hapsburgs that ended only with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the First World War. The brief period of freedom in the First Republic between the World Wars was quickly followed by almost half a century of Soviet influence climaxing with the grim suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the imposition of the most Stalinist government in Eastern Europe. It seems that neither the Catholic Austrian nor the Communist Soviet powers had much desire to promote the real story behind the loss of Czech independence. It seemed time to change all that.

So what was that story, and what relevance does it have for today? The Prague of Emperor Rudolf II, who had shifted the imperial capital there from Vienna, was the great center in sixteenth-century Europe for the study of magia, cabala, and alchymia. An amazing range of esoteric philosophers and Paracelcian doctors practiced or visited the city, including Michael Maier, physician to the emperor and author of *Atalanta fugiens*; Giordano Bruno, who dedicated some of his writings to the emperor; Heinrich Khunrath, author of the *Amphitheatre of Eternal Wisdom*; Oswald Croll, author of works on the magical harmonies of microcosm and macrocosm; and, of course, John Dee, a figure of enormous influence in Elizabethan England, mathematician, magus, tutor of Sir Philip Sydney, and explorer in the science of navigation. Dee left England in 1583 to spend eight mysterious years in Bohemia. After visiting Poland, he attempted to interest Emperor Rudolf in his deep spiritual and scientific work, but he met with mixed success. Catholic intrigues against Dee caused him to flee Prague and seek the willing protection of Count Willied Rozmberk on his estates at Trebon. It was this same aristocratic patron of alchemy and hermetic wisdom who developed Cesky Krumlov to its highest point. After his death his brother Petr Vok, who shared his interest in these matters, was closely associated with the figures involved in the events leading up to the Bohemian adventure of Frederick of the Palatine.

Clearly, enormous influences emanated from Prague and Bohemia toward Germany, England, Holland, and indeed the whole of Europe. Frances Yates shows us how a high culture, steeped in a mathematical approach to nature that was simultaneously scientific and deeply spiritual, developed powerfully in the first decade of the seventeenth century. In 1613 when Elizabeth, daughter of British King James I, married Frederick,

Elector Palatine, head of the German Protestant princes, there was immense rejoicing in London at this marriage of the Rhine and the Thames, and there was great hope that the policies of Queen Elizabeth I, protector of the liberal Protestant cause in continental Europe, would be revived. Shakespeare's *Tempest* was performed as part of the wedding festivities, Inigo Jones designed impressive masques, John Donne composed a marriage song, and all seemed very, very well.

The Prince took his bride to his magical castle in Heidelberg with its grottoes and gardens, enlivened with music from mechanical fountains, and with its depictions of symbolic mythological scenes. This exquisitely harmonious world was designed to assist visitors in their perception of the harmonies of the spheres and the wisdom of nature. Outside its gates, however, dark clouds of war loomed on the horizon as the truce between Reformation and Counter Reformation forces approached its conclusion. It was clear to anyone with political judgment that the Hapsburg powers in both their Austrian and Spanish aspects, spearheaded by the militant activities of the Jesuits, were about to launch an attempt to regain large tracts of Europe from the Lutherans and Calvinists. But was this prelude to the nightmarish Thirty Years' War simply a classic showdown between Catholics and Protestants, as most historians have perceived it? Or were there deeper esoteric currents at work?

From 1613 to 1620 a tremendously rich body of work was published in the area surrounding the Palatinate. This was truly a hermetic golden age in which the works of Michael Maier and Robert Fludd appeared in staggering abundance and complemented the mysterious documents known as the Rosicrucian manifestos. The first of these, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, or *a Discovery of the Fraternity of the Most Noble Order of the Rosy Cross*, appeared in print in 1614. The following year saw the publication of the *Confessio Fraternitatis* or *The Confession of the Most Laudable Fraternity of the Most Honorable Order of the Rosy Cross, written to all the Learned of Europe*. In 1616, a trio of works was completed with the appearance of the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*.

What were these amazing documents? They announce a new spiritual dispensation, or revelation, that can elevate humanity to renew all arts and sciences so that humanity "might understand his own nobleness, and why he is called Microcosmus, and how far his knowledge extendeth into Nature." They go on to describe the journeyings of the mysterious Christian



Rosencreutz, who had traveled the known world, gaining especially the "Magia and Cabala" of the East, and returning to Spain where he attempted to offer his new wisdom to the learned but was rebuffed. Instead, he returned to Germany, where he practiced philosophy, studied mathematics, and began to organize helpers in the work of the general reform of the world. Thus began the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross.

The second manifesto, the *Confessio*, describes further the profound wisdom and knowledge of Father R.C. A prophetic note is added, indicating that new stars foretelling wonders have appeared and that the time is coming when the tyranny of the Pope will be overthrown, and truth and light will pour into humanity. The *Chemical Wedding*, almost certainly authored by Johann Valentin Andreae, is an alchemical romance that tells the story of the hero's invitation to a wedding in a magical castle, and of the adventures, ceremonies, and miraculous occurrences that climax with Christian Rosencreutz's investiture into the Order of the Golden Stone.

These works engendered immense public enthusiasm and response. Many people wrote to the mysterious Brothers expressing their devotion to the noble ideals of the Brotherhood and their desire to join. But, of course, none received a reply, and the Rosicrucian mystery deepened as it has continued to do until the present day.

We do know that the hopes and dreams of this special time were cruelly dashed. Frederick and Elizabeth had, in 1619, been offered the throne of Bohemia and were crowned in St. Vitus's Cathedral, Prague in the last official act of the Hussite clergy, the first reformed Church of Europe. This coronation represented the high point for those who hoped to engineer by political means the new age spoken of in the Rosicrucian manifestos. Frederick and his supporters had hoped to establish a brilliant culture stretching from the Rhine to Bohemia, from Heidelberg to Prague, deeply committed to the deep spiritual explorations of alchemy, hermetic philosophy, and cabala, and intensely engaged in the scientific work that was about to erupt with the discoveries we now associate with a very different cultural climate. But the control of Bohemia by forces hostile to the Counter-Reformation was a slap in the face to the Hapsburg powers, and they wasted no time amassing their formidable military power to crush this upstart regime. Frederick's defeat at the White Mountain in 1620 was a turning point in European history that ignited the Thirty Years' War. Just as Prague and all its rich esoteric culture fell into the hands of Catholic fundamentalists,

Heidelberg, too, was overrun by Spanish forces and its marvelous library stolen and its gardens destroyed.

Michael Maier disappeared a few years later, Comenius barely escaped into exile, and the mystical Bohemian Brethren were outlawed. Emperor Rudolf and the Counts Rozmberk had been dead for some time. After a few years nothing remained of this rich and profound world so filled with wisdom and hope. And for English speakers, it remained this way until Frances Yates came along and, in 1972, published *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. We owe her a great debt, and that is why the conference from which this book derives was given in her honor. Scholars may rightly dispute some of her conclusions, and some do in this book. She was well aware that she was doing pioneering work, some of which would be disproved in time. But what cannot be disputed is that she brought to life a forgotten period of immense interest. She brought scholarly rigor to an area that had for too long been the domain only of occultists. Through her attunement to emblems, symbols, and art, and through her natural skills as a storyteller and her deep knowledge of “the more powerful philosophy” of the period, she paved the way for the full rediscovery of a vital epoch.

Some may wonder whether that age has any relevance for today. We live now in a time when the mechanistic, materialistic worldview that arose during the mid-seventeenth century no longer seems able to explain reality. We live also with the consequences of the divorce between science and spiritual values—the ecological degradation of much of the planet and the rise of an economic “science” that has encouraged the inanities of our consumer society. We need again a holistic worldview that reunites the inner and outer worlds and enables us to create the conditions needed for a sustainable and sane world in the twenty-first century. This book shows that we do not have to start from scratch. We don’t even need to rely primarily on the spiritual traditions of the East for inspiration in this time. Right in the cultural and historical backyard of the West, right in the very center of Europe, a time occurred when microcosm and macrocosm, inner and outer, individual and world, were united in a manner whose potential was never fulfilled.

Various outstanding figures in this century, including Carl Jung and Rudolf Steiner, investigated alchemy and concluded that there was far more to this secret art than conventional wisdom suggests. Nevertheless, few have penetrated to the core of this arcane world, though it clearly contains deep and worthwhile secrets. Fewer still have come to terms with the

Rosicrucian mystery itself. Of course, many groups exist today that consider themselves the living inheritors of this invisible tradition. Our conference in Cesky Krumlov made no attempt to arrive at an assessment of the validity of these claims, nor whether there can be such a thing as an exoteric society of R.C. brothers.

Our purpose was to live into a forgotten world using the twin powers of scholarship and ambience. The contents of this book will enrich the reader's knowledge of this period and deepen his or her attunement to the mystery of the Rose Cross. This book will even suggest how this same spiritual stream speaks to the present day by suggesting tasks and responsibilities for sensitive and responsible people in the contemporary world. But these pages cannot convey in full the warmth, conviviality, and openness of heart that characterized those magical days and nights in Cesky Krumlov. All of us who were present emerged strengthened and heartened in some subtle but unmistakable way.



Two years after the first conference, a second conference was held in the Czech Republic in August, 1997. It was entitled "Prague, Alchemy and the Hermetic Tradition." Throughout that summer a festival had taken place in Prague under the auspices of President Vaclav Havel. It had honored the period of the Emperor Rudolf II (1576–1612), who had made Prague the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, and who was a great patron of alchemy and hermetic philosophy. Not only were the great artworks and scientific instruments of the Rudolphine period reassembled from around the world in marvelous exhibits throughout the city, but also Universalia, the Association of Czech Hermetists, had created a remarkable alchemical exhibit on the Old Town Square in the twelfth-century House of the Stone Bell.

This was an opportunity not to be missed, to reconvene a gathering of those deeply interested in the esoteric history of Bohemia and Central Europe. Over two hundred people from twenty-five countries met for four days at the exquisite Zofin Palace on an island in the heart of Prague. They came to enter imaginatively into that extraordinary lost world of late Renaissance alchemy. The following essays will give you a taste of the information conveyed during those special days, but it falls to me to suggest the



mood and tone of the conference. As with “The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited” two years earlier, this event was suffused with a warmth and conviviality that can only be hinted at here. The magic of Prague, described by so many artists over the centuries, provided a magnificent backdrop to our reflections. Despite the commercial development that has overtaken the city in the 1990s, it does not require great sensitivity to imagine oneself walking the dark, evocative alleys of Old Town in the company of Michael Maier, Sendivogius, Tycho Brahe, Oswald Croll, and the other profound characters who made the city the greatest center for the study of the esoteric arts and sciences that the Western world has known. In the embattled world of sixteenth-century Europe, as Protestants and Catholics fought, killed, and burned one another in the name of religious correctness, Rudolf made Prague a cosmopolitan center of tolerance. His personal spiritual adviser was a cabalist; he met with the great teacher Rabbi Loew from the city’s vibrant Jewish community; and he granted to the Bohemian Brethren, the spiritual descendants of the martyr Jan Hus, the right to practice their beliefs without impediment. Perhaps Rudolf has gone down in

- Czech history as a strange, half-mad personality, but it can be argued that his behavior simply cannot be understood only within the context of the bigotry and hatred of the time, and that at its roots lies an attunement to esoteric wisdom, not insanity.

In today’s Prague we can still see where the alchemists of the day practiced their art at the Powder Tower within the castle. They performed physical alchemy in the laboratorio below, and spiritual alchemy in the oratorio above, and a visitor, if granted a few moments of silence, can easily imagine the piety and reverence with which they approached both dimensions of their task. For this was a time when science and spirituality were still intertwined, and the world of nature was a wisdom-filled book to be read by the philosopher.

Today we long for a fusion of science and spirituality, and in renaissance alchemy we see such a worldview in its last gorgeous flowering before the two domains split apart for over three hundred years. Now, as a new creative synthesis seems possible, we can draw inspiration from those whose profound hermetic conviction—*As Above, So Below*—enabled them to feel that they gazed into the very innermost workings of the human soul through their meticulous laboratory observations of the processes of transformation in the natural world.

Of course it is a huge leap of the imagination to grasp that the alchemists actually believed the human being was a microcosm of the universe and that, therefore, the inner world of the soul could be understood by meditating upon the transmutations of its correspondences in salt, sulphur, and mercury. Yet so it was, and today we cry out for a spiritual science that recognizes the sacred within the world of nature, one that approaches our burdened earth with reverence and in a spirit of mystery.

If our conference in Cesky Krumlov was held in honor of the great historian, Frances Yates, then its successor in Prague was really held in honor of those remarkable alchemical figures of the sixteenth century who developed a profound wisdom in accordance with the needs of the times, only to see the fruits of their work disappear in war, bloodshed, religious dogmatism, and, finally, in the rise of the modern scientific worldview. We contrived for a few days that summer to enter their world and their thinking with full imaginative force, and we were rewarded with an unforgettable experience filled with magic and good humor and with the sense that a noble tradition, too long neglected, is now returning to its rightful place of honor in Western culture. If this book helps the reader to glimpse something of this, then it will have succeeded. Our hope, dear reader, is that you too will detect a faint aroma of love and freedom between the lines of this book, and that you too can join your heart with the spirit of these gatherings.

RALPH WHITE  
*Cesky Krumlov, 1996 and*  
*New York City, 1998*

XV 4. 3.

Allgemeine und General  
REFORMATION,  
der gangen weltten Welt.

Wischen der

FAMA FRA-  
TERNITATIS,

Deß Löblichen Ordens des  
Rosentreuges / an alle Gelehrte  
vnd Häupter Europæ geschrie-  
ben:

Auch einer kurzen RESPONSION,  
von dem Herrn Haselmeyer gestellet / welcher  
deswegen von den Jesuiten ist gefänglich ein-  
gezogen / vnd auff eine Gallerey ge-  
schmiedet:

Izo öffentlich in Druck verfertiget /  
vnd allen irewen Herren communiciret  
worden.

*Alteyge. An. Laßort.  
Jaher. 1614.*

Gedruckt zu Cassel durch Wilhelm Bessell

ANNO M. DC. XIV.

FAMA FRATERNITATIS;

Oder

Entdeckung der  
Bruderschaft deß löblichen  
Ordens deß Rosenkreutzes /

Verben der

CONFESSIO

Oder

Bekannnuß derselben Fraternitet / an  
alle Gelehrte vnd Häupter in Europa  
geschrieben.

Auch etlichen Responsionen vnd Antwortan-  
gen / von Herrn Haselmeyern vnd andern gele-  
ten Leuten auff die Fama gestellet

Sampt etlichem Discurs von allgemeiner Reformation  
der gangen Welt

Izo von vielen Irrtümern endeliger / verbessert / vnd  
allen Lernbegierigen zu gut in offentliches Dient  
mit Gott allem gefertigt.

Gedruckt zu Frankfurt am Mayn / durch Johann  
Beyers in Verlegung Johann Beyers.

M. DC. XV.

Left: First edition of the Fama Fraternitatis (1614), the first manifesto of the Order of the Rosy Cross. Right: A later edition (1615), also containing the Confessio Fraternitatis R.C.

# Prologue

## *The Announcement [Fama] & Confession [Confessio] of the Most Honorable Order of the Rosy Cross*

### *Fama Fraternitatis*

We, the Bretheren of the *Fraternity* of the R.C. bestow our Greeting, Love and Prayers upon each and everyone who reads this our *Fama* of Christian intent.

Seeing the only Wise and Merciful God in these latter days hath poured out so richly his mercy and goodness to Mankind, wherby we do attain more and more to the perfect knowledge of his Son Jesus Christ and *Nature*, that justly we may boast of the happy time, wherein there is not only discovered unto US the half part of the World, which was heretofore unknown & hidden, that he hath also made manifest unto us many wonderful, and never heretofore seen, Works and Creatures of *Nature*, and more over hath raised men, indued with great Wisdom, which might partly renew and reduce all Arts (in this our Age spotted and imperfect) to perfection; so that finally Man might thereby understand his own Nobleness and Worth, and why he is called *Microcosmus*, and how far his knowledg extendeth in Nature.

Although the rude World herewith will be but little pleased, but rather smile and scoff thereat; also the Pride and Covetousness of the Learned is so great, it will not suffer them to agree together; but were they united, they might out of all those things which in this our Age God doth so richly bestow upon us, collect *Librum Naturae*, or a perfect Method of all Arts: but such is their opposition, that they still keep, and are loth to leave the old course, esteeming *Porphiry*, *Aristotle*, and *Galen*, yea and that which hath put a meer shew of learning, more than the clear and manifested Light and Truth; who if they were now living, with much joy would leave their

erroneous Doctrines. But here is too great weakness for such a great Work: And although in *Theologie*, *Physic*, and the *Mathematic*, the Truth doth manifest it self; nevertheless the old Enemy by his subtilty and craft doth shew himself in hindering every good purpose by his Instruments and contentious wavering people. To such an intent of a general Reformation, the most godly and highly illuminated Father, our Brother, C. R. a German, the chief and original of our Fraternity, hath much and long time laboured, who by reason of his poverty (although descended of Noble Parents) in the fifth year of his age was placed in a Cloyster, where he had learned indifferently the *Greek* and *Latin* Tongues, who (upon his earnest desire and request) being yet in his growing years, was associated to a Brother, *P. A. L.* who had determined to go to the Holy Land.

Although this Brother dyed in *Ciprus*, and so never came to *Jerusalem*, yet our Brother C. R. did not return, but shipped himself over, and went to *Damasco*, minding from thence to go to *Jerusalem*; but by reason of the feebleness of his body he remained still there, and by his skill in Physick he obtained much favour with the *Turks*: In the mean time he became by chance acquainted with the Wise men of *Damasco* in *Arabia*, and beheld what great Wonders they wrought, and how *Nature* was discovered unto them; hereby was that high and noble Spirit of Brother C. R. so stired up, that *Jerusalem* was not so much now in his mind as *Damasco*; also he could not bridle his desires any longer, but made a bargain with the *Arabians*, that they should carry him for a certain sum of money to *Damasco*; he was but of the age of sixteen years when he came thither, yet of a strong Dutch constitution; there the Wise received him (as he himself witnesseth) not as a stranger, but as one whom they had long expected, they called him by his name, and shewed him other secrets out of his Cloyster, whereat he could not but mightily wonder: He learned there better the *Arabian* Tongue; so that the year following he translated the Book *M.* into good *Latin*, which he afterwards brought with him. This is the place where he did learn his Physick, and his Mathematicks, whereof the World hath just cause to rejoyce, if there were more Love, and less Envy. After three years he returned again with good consent, shipped himself over *Sinus Arabicus* into *Egypt*, where he remained not long, but only took better notice there of the Plants and Creatures; he sailed over the whole *Mediterranean* Sea for to come unto *Fez*, where the *Arabians* had directed him. And it is a great shame unto us, that wise men, so far remote th'one from th'other, should

not only be of one opinion, hating all contentious Writings, but also be so willing and ready under the seal of secrecy to impart their secrets to others.

Every year the *Arabians* and *Affricans* do send one to another, inquiring one of another out of their Arts, if happily they had found out some better things, or if Experience had weakened their Reasons. Yearly there came something to light, whereby the *Mathematica*, *Physic* and *Magic* (for in those are they of *Fez* most skilful) were amended; as there is now adays in *Germany* no want of learned Men, *Magicians*, *Cabalists*, *Physicians*, and *Philosophers*, were there but more love and kindness among them, or that the most part of them would not keep their secrets close only to themselves. At *Fez* he did get acquaintance with those which are commonly called the Elementary Inhabitants, who revealed unto him many of their secrets: As we *Germans* likewise might gather together many things, if there were the like unity, and desire of searching out of secrets amongst us.

Of these of *Fez* he often did confess, that their *Magia* was not altogether pure, and also that their *Cabala* was defiled with their Religion; but notwithstanding he knew how to make good use of the same, and found still more better grounds of his Faith, altogether agreeable with the Harmony of the whole World, and wonderfully impressed in all Periods of times, and thence proceedeth that fair Concord, that as in every several kernel is contained a whole good tree or fruit, so likewise is included in the little body of Man the whole great World, whose Religion, policy, health, members, nature, language, words and works, are agreeing, sympathizing, and in equal tune and melody with God, Heaven and Earth; and that which is disagreeing with them, is error, falsehood, and of the Devil, who alone is the first, middle, and last cause of strife, blindness, and darkness in the World: Also, might one examine all and several persons upon the Earth, he should find that which is good and right, is always agreeing with it self; but all the rest is spotted with a thousand erroneous conceits.

After two years Brother C. R. departed the City *Fez*, and sailed with many costly things into *Spain*, hoping well, he himself had so well and so profitably spent his time in his travel, that the learned in *Europe* would highly rejoyce with him, and begin to rule, and order all their Studies, according to those sound and sure Foundations. He therefore conferred with the Learned in *Spain*, strewing unto them the Errors of our Arts, and how they might be corrected, and from whence they should gather the true *Inditia* of the Times to come, and wherein they ought to agree with those

things that are past; also how the faults of the Church and the whole *Philosophia Moralis* was to be amended: He shewed them new Growths, new Fruits, and Beasts, which did concord with old *Philosophy*, and prescribed them new *Axiomata*, whereby all things might fully be restored: But it was to them a laughing matter; and being a new thing unto them, they feared that their great Name should be lessened, if they should now again begin to learn and acknowledg their many years Errors, to which they were accustomed, and wherewith they had gained them enough: Who-so loveth unquietness, let him be reformed.

The same Song was also sang to him by other Nations, the which moved him the more (because it happened to him contrary to his expectation,) being then ready bountifully to impart all his Arts and Secrets to the Learned, if they would have but undertaken to write the true and infallible *Axiomata*, out of all Faculties, Sciences and Arts, and whole *Nature*, as that which he knew would direct them, like a Globe, or Circle, to the onely middle Point, and *Centrum*, and (as it is usual among the *Arabians*) it should onely serve to the wise and learned for a Rule, that also there might be a Society in *Europe*, which might have Gold, Silver, and precious Stones, sufficient for to bestow them on Kings, for their necessary uses, and lawful purposes: with which such as be Governors might be brought up, for to learn all that which God hath suffered Man to know, and thereby to be enabled in all times of need to give their counsel unto those that seek it, like the Heathen Oracles: verily we must confess that the world in those days was already big with those great Commotions, laboring to be delivered of them; and did bring forth painful, worthy men, who brake with all force through Darkness and Barbarism, and left us who succeeded to follow them: and assuredly they have been the uppermost point in *Trygono igneo*, whose flame now should be more and more brighter, and shall undoubtedly give to the World the last Light.

Such a one likewise hath *Theophrastus* [Paracelsus of Hohenheim] been in Vocation nevertheless hath he diligently read over the Book M.: whereby his sharp *ingenium* was exalted; but this man was also hindered in his course by the multitude of the learned and wise-seeming men, that he was never able peaceably to confer with others of his Knowledg and Understanding he had of *Nature*. And therefore in his writing he rather mocked these busie bodies, and doth now shew them altogether what he was; yet nevertheless there is found with him well grounded the aforementioned *Harmonia*, which

without doubt he had imparted to the Learned, if he had not found them rather worthy of subtil vexation, than to be instructed in greater Arts and Sciences; he then with a free and careless life lost his time, and left unto the World their foolish pleasures.

But that we do not forget our loving Father, Brother C. R. he after many painful Travels, and his fruitless true Instructions, returned again into *Germany*, the which he (by reason of the alterations [the Reformation] which were shortly to come, and of the strange and dangerous contentions) heartily loved: There, although he could have bragged with his Art, but specially of the transmutations of Metals; yet did he esteem more Heaven, and the Citizens thereof, Man, then all vain glory and pomp.

Nevertheless he builded a fitting and neat habitation, in the which he ruminated his Voyage, and Philosophy, and reduced them together in a true Memorial. In this house he spent a great time in the *Mathematicks*, and made many fine Instruments, *ex omnibus hujus artis partibus*, whereof there is but little remaining to us, as hereafter you shall understand. After five years came again into his mind the wished for Reformation; and in regard he doubted of the ayd and help of others, although he himself was painful, lusty, and unwearisom, he undertook, with some few adjoynd with him, to attempt the same: wherefore he desired to that end, to have out of his first Cloyster (to the which he bare a great affection) three of his Brethren, Brother G. V. Brother J. A. and Brother J. O. who besides that, they had some more knowledg in the Arts, than at that time many others had, he did binde those three unto himself, to be faithful, diligent, and secret; as also to commit carefully to writing, all that which he should direct and instruct them in, to the end that those which were to come, and through especial Revelation should be received into this Fraternity, might not be deceived of the least sillable and word.

After this manner began the Fraternity of the *Rosie Cross*, first, by four persons onely, and by them was made the Magical Language and writing, with a large Dictionary, which we yet dayly use to Gods praise and glory, and do finde great wisdom therein; they made also the first part of the Book M: but in respect that that labor was too heavy, and the unspeakable concourse of the sick hindred them, and also whilst his new building (called *Sancti spiritus*) was now finished, they concluded to draw and receive yet others more into their Fraternity; to this end was chosen brother R. C. his deceased fathers brothers son, brother B. a skilful Painter, G. and



P. D. their Secretary, all *Germaines* except J. A. so in all they were eight in number, all batchelors and of vowed virginity, by those was collected a book or volume of all that which man can desire, wish, or hope for.

Although we do now freely confess, that the World is much amended within an hundred years, yet we are assured, that our *Axiomata* shall unmovably remain unto the Worlds End, and also the world in her highest & last Age shall not attain to see any thing else; for our *Rota* takes her beginning from that day when God spake *Fiat*, and shall end when he shall speak *Pereat*; yet Gods Clock striketh every minute, where ours scarce striketh perfect hours. We also stedfastly beleeve, that if our Brethren and Fathers had lived in this our present and clear light, they would more roughly have handled the Pope, *Mahomet*, Scribes, Artists, and Sophisters, and had shewed themselves more helpful, not simply with sighs, and wishing of their end and consummation.

When now these eight Brethren had disposed and ordered all things in such manner, as there was not now need of any great labour, and also that every one was sufficiently instructed, and able perfectly to discourse of secret and manifest Philosophy, they would not remain any longer together, but as in the beginning they had agreed, they separated themselves into several Countries, because that not only their *Axiomata* might in secret be more profoundly examined by the learned, but that they themselves, if in some Country or other they observed any thing, or perceived some Error, they might inform one another of it.

Their Agreement was this; First, That none of them should profess any other thing, than to cure the sick, and that *gratis*. 2. None of the Posterity should be constrained to wear one certain kind of habit, but therein to follow the custom of the Country. 3. That every year upon the day C. [Christmas] they should meet together at the house S. *Spiritus*, or write the cause of his absence. 4. Every Brother should look about for a worthy person, who after his disease might succeed him. 5. The word C. R. should be their Seal, Mark, and Character. 6. The Fraternity should remain secret one hundred years. These six Articles they bound themselves one to another to keep; and five of the Brethren departed, only the Brethren B. and D. remained with the Father *Fra: R. C.* a whole year; when these likewise departed, then remained by him his Cousen and Brother J. O. so that he hath all the clays of his life with him two of his Brethren. And although that as yet the Church was not cleansed, nevertheless we knew that they

did think of her, and what with longing desire they looked for: Every year they assembled together with joy, and made a full resolution of that which they had done; there must certainly have been great pleasure, to hear truly and without invention related and rehearsed all the Wonders which God hath poured out here and there through the World. Every one may hold it out for certain, that such persons as were sent, and joyned together by God, and the Heavens; and chosen Out of the wisest of men, as have lived in many Ages, did live together above all others in highest Unity, greatest Secrecy, and most kindness one towards another.

After such a most laudable sort they did spend their lives; and although they were free from all diseases and pain, yet notwithstanding they could not live and pass their time appointed of God. The first of this Fraternity which dyed, and that in *England*, was *J. O.* as Brother *C.* long before had foretold him; he was very expert, and well learned in *Cabala*, as his Book called *H.* witnesseth: In *England* he is much spoken of, and chiefly because he cured a young Earl of *Norfolk* of the Leprosie. They had concluded, that as much as possibly could be their burial place should be kept secret, as at this day it is not known unto us what is become of some of them, yet every ones place was supplied with a fit successor; but this we will confesse publicly by these presents to the honour of God, That what secret soever we have learned out of the book *M.* (although before our eyes we behold the image and *pattern* of all the world) yet are there not strewn unto us our misfortunes, nor hour of death, the which only is known to God himself, who thereby would have us keep in a continual readiness; but hereof more in our Confession, where do we set down 37 Reasons wherefore we now do make known our Fraternity, and proffer such high Mysteries freely, and without constraint and reward: also do we promise more gold than both the Indies bring to the King of *Spain*; for *Europe* is with child and wil bring forth a strong child, who shall stand in need of a great godfathers gift.

After the death of *J. O.* Brother *R. C.* rested not, but as soon as he could, called the rest together, (and as we suppose) then his grave was made; although hitherto we (who were the latest) did not know when our loving father *R. C.* died, and had no more but the bare names of the beginners, and all their successors to us; yet there came into our memory, a secret, which through dark and hidden words, and speeches of the 100 years, brother *A.* the successor of *D.* (who was of the last and second row and succession, and had lived amongst many of us,) did impart unto us of

and succession, and had lived amongst many of us,) did impart unto us of the third row and succession; otherwise we must confess, that after the death of the said *A.* none of us had in any manner known any thing of Brother *R. C.* and of his first fellow-brethren, than that which was extant of them in our Philosophical *Bibliotheca*, amongst which our *Axiomata* was held for the chiefest, *Rotae Mundi*, for the most artificial, and *Protheus* the most profitable.<sup>1</sup> Likewise we do not certainly know if these of the second row have been of the like wisdom as the first, and if they were admitted to all things. It shall be declared hereafter to the gentle Reader, not onely what we have heard of the burial of *R. C.* but also made manifest publicly by the foresight, sufferance and commandment of God, whom we most faithfully obey, that if we shall be answered discreetly and Christian-like, we will not be afraid to set forth publicly in Print, our names, and sirnames, our meetings, or any thing else that may be required at our hands.

Now the true and fundamental relation of the finding out of the high illuminated man of God, *Fra: C. R. C.* is this: After that *A.* in *Gallia Narbonensi* was deceased, then succeeded in his place, our loving Brother *N. N.* this man after he had repaired unto us to take the solemn oath of fidelity and secrecy, he informed us *bona fide*, That *A.* had comforted him in telling him, that this Fraternity should ere long not remain so hidden, but should be to all the whole *German* Nation helpful, needful, and commendable; of the which he was not in any wise in his estate ashamed of. The year following after he had performed his School right, and was minded now to travel, being for that purpose sufficiently provided with *Fortunatus* purse, he thought (he being a good *Architect*) to alter something of his building, and to make it more fit: in such renewing he lighted upon the memorial Table which was cast of brasse, and containeth all the names of the brethren, with some few other things; this he would transfer in another more fitting vault: for where or when *Fra: R. C.* died, or in what country he was buried, was by our predecessors concealed and unknown unto us. In this Table stuck a great naile somewhat strong, so that when he was with force drawn out, he took with him an indifferent big stone out of the thin wall, or plaistering of the hidden door, and so unlooked for uncovered the door; wherefore we did with joy and longing

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1. *Rotae Mundi* = a cosmic "clock," or "wheel," described by Raimundus Lullus (1235–1315) in his *Ars Magna* and later by G. W. V. Leibnitz (1646–1716) in his *De Arte Combinatoria*.

throw down the rest of the wall, and cleared the door, upon which that was written in great letters, *Post 120 annos patebo* [after 120 years I will open], with the year of the Lord [1484] under it; therefore we gave God thanks and let it rest that same night, because first we would overlook our *Rotam*: but we refer our selves again to the Confession, for what we here publish is done for the help of those that are worthy, but to the unworthy (God willing) it will be small profit: For like as our door was after so many years wonderfully discovered, also there shall be opened a door to *Europe* (when the wall is removed) which already doth begin to appear, and with great desire is expected of many.

In the morning following we opened the door, and there appeared to our sight a Vault of seven sides and corners, every side five foot broad, and the height of eight foot; Although the Sun never shined in this Vault, nevertheless it was enlightned with another sun, which had learned this from the Sun, and was scituated in the upper part in the Center of the sieling; in the midst, in stead of a Tomb-stone, was a round Altar covered over with a plate of brass, and thereon this engraven:

*A. C. R.C. Hoc universi compendium  
unius mili sepulchrum feci.*<sup>2</sup>

Round about the first Circle or Brim stood,

*Jesus mihi omnia.* [Jesus is my all]

In the middle were four figures, inclosed in circles, whose circumscription was,

1. *Neququam vacuum.*
2. *Legis Jugum.*
3. *Libertas Evangelij.*
4. *Dei gloria intacta.*<sup>3</sup>

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2. *Unius = vivus.* "This compendium of the Universe I made in my lifetime to be my tomb."

3. "A vacuum exists nowhere. / The yoke of the Law / The Liberty of the Gospel / The Entire Glory of God."

This is all clear and bright, as also the seven sides and the two *Heptagoni*: so we kneeled altogether down, and gave thanks to the sole wise, sole mighty and sole eternal God, who hath taught us more than all mens wit could have found out, praised be his holy name. This Vault we parted in three parts, the upper part or sieling, the wall or side, the ground or floor.

Of the upper part you shall understand no more of it at this time, but that it was divided according to the seven sides in the triangle, which was in the bright center; but what therein is contained, you shall God willing (that are desirous of our society) behold the same with your own eye; but every side or wall is parted into ten squares, every one with their several figures and sentences, as they are truly showed, and set forth *Concentratum* here in our book.

The bottom again is parted in the triangle, but because therein is described the power and rule of the inferior Governors, we leave to manifest the same, for fear of the abuse by the evil and ungodly world. But those that are provided and stored with the heavenly Antidote, they do without fear or hurt, tread on, and bruise the head of the old and evil serpent, which this our age is well fitted for: every side or wall had a door for a chest, wherein there lay divers things, especially all our books, which otherwise we had, besides the *Vocabular of Theoph: Par. Ho* [Paracelsus] and these which daily unfalsifieth we do participate.<sup>4</sup> Herein also we found our Father's *Itinerarium*, and *vitam*, whence this relation for the most part is taken. In another chest were looking-glasses of divers virtues, as also in other places were little bells, burning lamps, & chiefly wonderful artificial Songs; generally al done to that end, that if it should happen after many hundred years, the Order or Fraternity should come to nothing, they might by this onely Vault be restored again.

Now as yet we had not seen the dead body of our careful and wise Father, we therefore removed the Altar aside, there we lifted up a strong plate of brass, and found a fair and worthy body, whole and unconsumed, as the same is here lively counterfeited, with all the Ornaments and Attires; in his hand he held a parchment book, called *T* [Testament or Thesaurus], the which next unto the Bible, is our greatest treasure, which ought not lightly to be delivered to the censure of the world. At the end of this book standeth this following *Elogium*.

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4. Or, "and which we daily communicate unfalsified."

*Granum pectori Jesu insitum.*

*C. Ros. C. ex nobili atque splendida Germaniae R.C. familia oriandus, vir sui seculi divinis revelationibus subtilissimis imaginationibus, indefessis laboribus ad coelestia, atque humana mysteria; arcanave admissus postquam suam (quam Arabico, & Africano itineribus Collegerat) plusquam regiam, atque imperatoriam Gazam suo seculo nondum convenientem, posteritati eruendam custo divisisset & jam suarum Artium, ut & nominis, fides acconjunctissimos heredes instituisset, mundum minutum omnibus motibus magno illi respondentem fabricasset hocque tandem preteritarum, praesentium, & futurarum, rerum compendio extracto, centenario major non morbo (quem ipse nunquam corporis expertus erat, nunquam alios infestare sinebat) ullo pellente sed spiritu Dei evocante, illuminatam animam (inter Fratrum amplexus & ultima oscula) fidelissimo creatori Deo reddidisset, Pater dilectissimus, Fra: suavissimus, praeceptor fidelissimus amicus integerimus, a suis ad 120 annos hic absconditus est.<sup>5</sup>*

Underneath they had subscribed themselves,

1. *Fra: I. A. Fr. C. H. electione Fraternitatis caput.*

[By the choice of Fr. C. H., head of the Fraternity]

2. *Fr: G. V. M. P. C.*

3. *Fra: R. C. Iunior haeres S. Spiritus.*

4. *Fra: B. M. P. A. Pictor & Architectus.*

5. *Fr: G. G. M. P. I. Cabalista.*

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5. A Grain Buried in the Breast of Jesus. C. Ros. C., sprung from the noble and renowned German family of R. C.; a man admitted into the Mysteries and secrets of heaven and earth through the divine revelations, subtle cogitations and unwearied toil of his life. In his journeys through Arabia and Africa he collected a treasure surpassing that of Kings and Emperors; but finding it unsuitable for his times, he kept it guarded for posterity to uncover, and appointed loyal and faithful heirs of his arts and also of his name. He constructed a microcosm corresponding in all motions to the Macrocosm and finally drew up this compendium of things past, present and to come. Then, having now passed the century of years, though oppressed by no disease, which he had neither felt in his own body nor allowed to attack others, but summoned by the Spirit of God, amid the last embraces of his bretheren he rendered up his illuminated soul to God his Creator. A beloved Father, an affectionate Brother, a faithful Teacher, a loyal Friend, he was hidden here by his disciples for 120 years.

*Secundi Circuli.*

1. *Fra: P. A. Successor, Fr: I. O. Mathematicus.*
2. *Fra: A. Successor Fra. P. D.*
3. *Fra: R. Successor patris C. R. C. cum Christo triumphantis.*

At the end was written,

*Ex Deo nascimur, in Jesu morimur, per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus.*<sup>6</sup>

At that time was already dead Brother *I. O.* and *Fra: D* but their burial place where is it to be found? we doubt not but our *Fra: Senior* hath the same, and some especial thing layd in Earth, and perhaps likewise hidden: we also hope that this our Example will stir up others more diligently to enquire after their names (whom we have therefore published) and to search for the place of their burial; for the most part of them, by reason of their practice and physick, are yet known, and praised among very old folks; so might perhaps our *Gaza* be enlarged, or at least be better cleared.

Concerning *Minutum Mundum*, we found it kept in another little Altar, truly more finer than can be imagined by any understanding man; but we will leave him undescribed, untill we shal truly be answered upon this our true hearted *Famam*; and so we have covered it again with the plates, and set the altar thereon, shut the door, and made it sure, with all our seals; besides by instruction and command of our *Rota*, there are come to sight some books, among which is contained *M.* (which were made in stead of household care by the praise-worthy *M. P.*) Finally we departed the one from the other, and left the natural heirs in possession of our Jewels. And so we do expect the answer and judgment of the learned, or unlearned.

Howbeit we know after a time there will now be a general reformation, both of divine and hurr.ane things, according to our desire, and the expectation of others: for it's fitting, that before the rising of the Sun, there should appear and break forth *Aurora*, or some clearness, or divine light in the sky; and so in the mean time some few, which shall give their names, may joyn together, thereby to increase the number and respect of our

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6. "Out of God we are born, in Jesus we die, through the Holy Spirit we are reborn."

*Fraternity*, and make a happy and wished for beginning of our *Philosophical Canons*, prescribed to us by our brother *R. C.* and be partakers with us of our treasures (which never can fail or be wasted) in all humility, and love to be eased of this worlds labor, and not walk so blindly in the knowledge of the wonderful works of God.

But that also every Christian may know of what Religion and belief we are, we confess to have the knowledge of Jesus Christ (as the same now in these last days, and chiefly in *Germany*, most clear and pure is professed, and is now adays cleansed and voyd of all swerving people, Hereticks, and false Prophets,) in certain and noted Countries maintained, defended and propagated: Also we use two Sacraments, as they are instituted with all *Formes* and *Ceremonies* of the first renewed Church. In *Politia* we acknowledge the *Roman Empire* and *Quartam Monarchiam* [The Fourth Kingdom] for our Christian head; albeit we know what alterations be at hand, and would fain impart the same with all our hearts, to other godly learned men; notwithstanding our hand-writing which is in our hands, no man (except God alone) can make it common, nor any unworthy person is able to bereave us of it. But we shall help with secret aid this so good a cause, as God shal permit or hinder us: For our God is not blinde, as the Heathens *Fortuna*, but is the Churches Ornament, and the honor of the Temple. Our *Philosophy* also is not a new Invention, but as *Adam* after his *fall* hath it, and as *Moses* and *Solomon* used it; also she ought not much to be doubted of, or contradicted by other opinions, or meanings; but seeing the truth is peaceable, brief, and always like her self in all things, and especially accorded by with *Jesus in omni parse* and all members. And as he is the true Image of the Father, so is she his Image; It shal not be said, this is true according to *Philosophy*, but true according to *Theologie*; And wherein *Plato*, *Aristotle*, *Pythagoras* and others did hit the mark, and wherein *Enoch*, *Abraham*, *Moses*, *Solomon* did excel; but especially wherewith that wonderful book the *Bible* agreeth. All that same concurrerth together, and make a Sphere or Globe, whose total parts are equidistant from the Center, as hereof more at large and more plain shal be spoken of in Christianly Conference.

But now concerning (and chiefly in this our age) the ungodly and accursed *Gold-making*, which hath gotten so much the upper hand, whereby under colour of it, many runagates and roguish people do use great villanies, and cozen and abuse the credit which is given them: yea now adays men of discretion do hold the transmutation of Mettals to be



the highest point, and *fastigium* in *Philosophy*, this is all their intent, and desire, and that God would be most esteemed by them, and honored, which could make great store of Gold, and in abundance, the which with unpremeditate prayers, they hope to attain of the alknowing God, and searchers of all hearts: we therefore do by these presents publicly testifie, That the true *Philosophers* are far of another mince, esteeming little the making of Gold, which is but a *parergon*; for besides that they have a thousand better things.

And we say with our loving Father *R. C. C. Phy aurum nisi quantum aurum*, for unto them the whole nature is detected: he doth not rejoyce, that he can make Gold, and that, as saith Christ, the devils are obedient unto him; but is glad that he seeth the Heavens open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending, and his name written in the book of life. Also we do testifie that under the name of *Chymia* many books and pictures are set forth in *Contumeliam gloria Dei*, as we wil name them in their due season, and wil give to the pure-hearted a Catalogue, or Register of them: And we pray all learned men to take heed of these kinde of Books; for the enemy never resteth, but soweth his weeds, til a stronger one doth root it out. So according to the wil and meaning of *Fra: C. R. C.* we his brethren request again all the learned in *Europa*, who shal read (sent forth in five Languages) this our *Famam* and *Confessionem*, that it would please them with good deliberation to ponder this our offer, and to examine most nearly and most sharply their Arts, and behold the present time with all diligence, and to declare their mince, either *Communicato consilio*, or *singulatim* by Print.

And although at this time we make no mention either of our names, or meetings, yet nevertheless every ones opinion shal assuredly come to our hands, in what language so ever it be; nor any body shal fail, who so gives but his name to speak with some of us, either by word of mouth, or else if there be some lett in writing. And this we say for a truth, That whosoever shal earnestly, and from his heart, bear affection unto us, it shal be beneficial to him in goods, body and soul; but he that is false-hearted, or onely greedy of riches, the same first of all shal not be able in any manner of wise to hurt us, but bring himself to utter wine and destruction Also our building (although one hundred thousand people had very near seen and beheld the same) shal for ever remain untouched, undestroyed, and hidden to the wicked world, *sub umbra alarum tuarum Jehova* [Under the shadow of thy wings, Jehovah].



*A Preface of the Confession to the  
Reader who is desirous of  
Wisdom.*

Here Gentle Reader, you shal finde incorporated in our Confession thirty seven Reasons of our purpose, and intention, the which according to thy pleasure thou mayst seek out and compare them together: thou mayst also consider with thy self, if they be weighty, and sufficient enough to bring and perswade thee for to take our parts.

Verily it requires no smal pains to confirm that which men have not yet seen, but when it shal once com to light we doubt not, but they will then justly be ashamed of such doubts, and conjectures. And as we do now altogether securely, freely, and without any hurt call the *Pope of Rome* Antichrist, the which heretofore was held for a deadly sin, and such in all Countries were put to death for it. So we know certainly, that the time shal likewise come, that that which we yet keep in secret, we shal openly, freely, and with a loud voice publish and confess it before al the world; the which *Gentle Reader* wish with us with all thy heart, that it may happen with speed.

*Confessio Fraternitatis,*

Or,

*The Confession of the laudable Fraternity  
of the most honorable Order of  
the Rosie Cross, written to  
the Learned of Europe.*

Whatsoever there is published, and made known to every one, concerning our *Fraternity*, by the foresaid *Fama*, let no man esteem lightly of it, nor hold it as an idle or invented thing, and much less receive the same, as though it were onely a meer conceit of ours. It is the Lord *Jehovah* (who

seeing the Lords Sabbath is almost at hand, and hastened again, his period or course being finished, to his first beginning) doth turn about the course of Nature; and what heretofore hath been sought with great pains, and dayly labor, is now manifested unto those who make small account, or scarcely once think upon it; but these which desire it, it is in a manner forced and thrust upon them, that thereby the life of the godly may be eased of all their toyl and labor, and be no more subject to the storms of unconstant Fortune; but the wickedness of the ungodly thereby, with their due and deserved punishment, be augmented and multiplied.

Although we cannot be by any suspected of the least Heresie, or of any wicked beginning, or purpose against the worldly Government; we do condemn the East and the West, (meaning the *Pope* and *Mahomet*) blasphemers against our Lord Jesus Christ, and offer and present with a good will to the chief head of the Romish Empire, our prayers, secrets, and great treasures of Gold.

Yet we have thought good, and fit for the Learned sakes, to add somewhat more to this, and make a better explanation, if there be any thing too deep, hidden, and set down over dark in the *Fama*, or for certain reasons were altogether omitted, and left out; hoping herewith the Learned will be more addicted unto us, and be made far more fitter and willing for our purpose.

Concerning the alteration and amendment of *Philosophy*, we have (as much as at this present is needful) sufficiently declared, to wit, that the same is altogether weak and faulty; yet we doubt not, although the most part falsly to alledge that she (I know not how) is sound and strong, yet notwithstanding she fetches her last breath and is departing.

But as commonly, even in the same place or Country where there breaketh forth a new unaccustomed disease, Nature also there discovereth a medicine against the same; so there doth appear for so manifold infirmities of *Philosophy*, the right means, and unto our *Patria* sufficiently offered, whereby she may become sound again, which is now to be renewed and altogether new.

No other *Philosophy* we have, than that which is the head & sum, the foundation and contents of all faculties, sciences and arts, the which (if we will behold our age) containeth much of *Theology* and medicine, but little of the wisdom of Lawyers, and doth diligently search both heaven and earth: or, to speak briefly thereof, which doth manifest and declare sufficiently Man; whereof then all Learned who will make themselves known

unto us, and come into our brotherhood, shall finde more wonderful secrets by us then heretofore they did attain unto, and did know, or are able to believe or utter.

Wherefore, to declare briefly our meaning hereof, we ought to labor carefully that there be not onely a wondering at our meeting and adhortation, but that likewise every one may know, that although we do highly esteem and regard such mysteries and secrets, we nevertheless hold it fit, that the knowledge thereof be manifested and revealed to many.

For it is to be taught and believed, that this our unhoped willing, offer wil raise many and divers thoughts in men, unto whom (as yet) be unknown *Miranda sexta aetatis*, or those which by reason of the course of the world, esteem the things to come like unto the present, and are hindred through all manner of importunities of this their time, so that they live no otherwise in the world, then blinde fools, who can, in the clear Sun-shine day, discern and know nothing, then onely by feeling.

Now concerning the first part, we hold this, that the Meditations, knowledge and inventions of our loving Christian Father (of all that, which from the beginning of the world, *Mans Wisdom*, either through Gods Revelation, or through the service of the Angels and spirits, or through the sharpness and deepness of understanding, or through long observation, use and experience, bath found out, invented brought forth, corrected, and till now hath been propagated & transplanted) are so excellent worthy and great, that if all books should perish, and by Gods almighty suffrance, all writings, & all lerning should be lost, yet the posterity will be able onely thereby to lay a new foundation, and bring truth to light again; the which perhaps would not be so hard to do if one should begin to pull down and destroy the old ruinous building, and then begin to enlarge the fore Court, afterwards bring the lights in the Lodgings, and then change the doors, staples and other things according to our intention.

But to whom would not this be acceptable, for to be manifested to every one rather than to have it kept and spared, as an especial ornament for the appointed time to come?

Wherefore should we not with all our hearts rest and remain in the onely truth (which men through so many erroneous and crooked ways do seek) if it had onely pleased God to lighten unto us the sixth *Candelabrum* were it not good that we needed not to care, not to fear hunger, poverty, sickness and age?

Were it not a precious thing, that you could always live so, as if you had liv'd from the beginning of the world, and moreover, as you should stil live to the end thereof? Were it not excellent, you dwel in one place, that neither the people which dwel beyond the River *Ganges* in the *Indies* could hide any thing, nor those who live in *Peru* might be able to keep secret their counsels from thee?

Were it not a precious thing, that you could so read in one onely book, and withal by reading understand, and remember all that, which in all other books (which heretofore have been, and are now, and hereafter shal come out) bath been, is, and shal be learned, and found out of them?

How pleasant were it, that you could so sing, that in stead of stony rocks you could draw to [yourself] the pearls and precious stones, in stead of wilde beasts, spirits, and in stead of hellish *Pluto*, move the mighty Princes of the world?

O ye people, Gods counsel is far otherwise, who bath concluded now to encrease and enlarge the number of our *Fraternity*, the which we with such joy have undertaken, as we have heretofore obtained this great treasure without our merits, yea without any our hopes, and thoughts; and purpose with the like fidelity to put the same in practice, that neither the compassion nor pity of our own children (which some of us in the *Fraternity* have) shal draw us from it, because we know that these unhopd for goods cannot be inherited, nor by chance be obtained.

If there be some body now, which on the other side wil complain of our discretion, that we offer our Treasures so freely, and without any difference to all men, and do not rather regard and respect more the godly, learned, wise, or princely persons, then the common people; those we do not contradict, seeing it is not a slight and easie matter; but withall we signifie so much, that our *Arcana* or Secrets will no ways be common, and generally made known: Although the *Fama* be set forth in five languages, and is manifested to every one, yet we do partly very well know, that the unlearned and gross wits will not receive, nor regard the same; as also the worthiness of those who shall be accepted into our Fraternity are not esteemed and known of us by Mans Carefulness, but by the Rule of our Revelation and Manifestation. Wherefore if the unworthy cry and call a thousand times, or if they shall offer and present themselves to us a thousand times, yet God hath commanded our ears, that they should hear none of them: yea, God hath so compassed us about with his Clouds, that

unto us his servants no violence or force can be done or committed; wherefore we neither can be seen or known by any body, except he had the eyes of an Eagle. It hath been necessary that the *Fama* should be set forth in every ones Mother Tongue, because those should not be defrauded of the knowledg thereof, whom (although they be unlearned) God hath not excluded from the happiness of this Fraternity; the which shall be divided and parted into certain degrees; as those which dwell in the City *Damcar* in *Arabia*, who have a far different politick order from the other *Arabians*. For there do govern only wise and understanding men, who by the Kings permission make particular Laws; according unto which example also the Government shall be instituted in *Europe* (whereof we have a description set down by our Christianly Father) when first is done and come to pass that which is to precede. And thenceforth our Trumpet shall publicquely sound with a loud sound, and great noise, when namely the same (which at this present is shewed by few, and is secretly, as a thing to come, declared in Figures and Pictures) shall be free, and publicquely proclaimed, and the whole World be filled withall. Even in such manner as heretofore, many godly people have secretly and altogether desperately pusht at the Popes Tyranny, which afterwards, with great earnest, and especial zeal in *Germany*, was thrown from his seat, and trodden under-foot, whose final fall is delayed, and kept for our times, when he also shall be scratched in pieces with nails, and an end be made of his Asses cry, by a new voyce: The which we know is already reasonably manifest and known to many learned men in *Germany*, as their Writings and secret Congratulations do sufficiently witness the same.

We could here relate and declare what all the time, from the year of our Lord 1378. (in which year our Christian Father was born) till now, hath happened, where we might rehearse what alterations he hath seen in the World these one hundred six years of his life, which he hath left to our Brethren and us after his decease to peruse: But brevity, which we do observe, will not permit at this present to make rehearsal of it, till a more fit time: At this time it is enough for these which do not despise our Declaration, having therefore briefly touched it, thereby to prepare the way for their acquaintance and friendship with us.

Yea, to whom it is permitted, that he may see, and for his instruction use those great Letters and Characters which the Lord God hath written and imprinted in Heaven and Earths Edifice, through the alteration of

Government, which hath been from time to time altered and renewed; the same is already (although as yet unknown to himself) ours: And as we know he will not despise our inviting and calling, so none shall fear any deceit; for we promise, and openly say, That no mans uprightness and hopes shall deceive him, whosoever shall make himself known unto us under the Seal of Secrecy, and desire our Fraternity.

But to the false Hypocrites, and to those that seek other things then Wisdom, we say and witness by these presents publickely, we cannot be made known, and be betrayed unto them; and much less they shall be able to hurt us any manner of way without the Will of God; but they shall certainly be partakers of all the punishment spoken of in our *Fama*; so their wicked Counsels shall light upon themselves, and our Treasures shall remain untouched and unstirred, until the Lion doth come, who will ask them for his use, and imploy them for the confirmation and establishment of his Kingdom. We ought therefore here to observe well, and make it known unto every one, that God hath certainly and most assuredly concluded to send and grant to the World before her end, which presently there upon shall ensue, such a Truth, Light, Life and Glory, as the first man *Adam* had, which he lost in Paradise, after the which his successors were put, and driven with him to misery: Wherefore there shall cease all servitude, falshood, lyes, and darkness, which by little and little, with the great Worlds Revolution, was crept into all Arts, Works and Governments of Men, and have darkened the most part of them. For from thence are proceeded an innumerable sort of all manner of false Opinions and Heresies, that scarce the wisest of all was able to know whose Doctrine and Opinion he should follow and embrace, and could not well and easily be discerned; seeing on the one part they were detained, hindered, and brought into Errors through the respect of the Philosophers and learned men, and on the other part through true experience the which, when it shall once be abolished and removed, and in stead thereof a right and true Rule instituted, then there will remain thanks unto them which have taken pains therein; but the Work it self shall be attributed to the Blessedness of our Age.

As we now willingly confess, that many principal men by their Writings will be a great furtherance unto this Reformation which is to come; so we desire not to have this honour ascribed to us, as if such Work were only commanded and imposed upon us; but we confess, and witness openly

with the Lord Jesus Christ, that it shall first happen that the stones shall arise, and offer their service, before there shall be any want of Executors and Accomplishers of Gods Counsel: yea the Lord God hath already sent before certain Messengers, which should testifie his Will, to wit, some new Stars, which do appear and are seen in the Firmament in *Serpentario* and *Cygro*, which signifie and give themselves known to every one, that they are powerful *Signacula* of great weighty matters. So then, the secret hid Writings and Characters are most necessary for all such things which are found out by Men: Although that great Book of Nature stand open to all Men, yet there are but few that can read and understand the same. For as there is given to Man two instruments to hear, likewise two to see, and two to smell, but only one to speak, and it were but vain to expect speech from the ears, of hearing from the eyes: So there hath been Ages or Times which have seen, there have also been Ages that have heard, smelt, and tasted: now there remains yet that which in short time, honour shall be likewise given to the Tongue, and by the same; what before times hath been seen, heard, and smelt, now finally shall be spoken and uttered forth, viz. when the World shall awake out of her heavy and drowsie sleep, and with an open heart, bare-head and barefoot, shall merrily and joyfully meet the now arising Sun.

These Characters and Letters, as God hath here and there incorporated them in the holy Scripture the *Bible*, so hath he imprinted them most apparently into the Wonderful Creation of Heaven and Earth, yea in all Beasts. So that like as the *Mathematician* or *Astronomer* can long before see and know the Eclipses which are to come, so we may verily fore-know and fore-see the darkness of Obscurations of the Church, and how long they shall last: From the which Characters or Letters we have borrowed our *Magick* writing, and have found out, and made a new Language for our selves, in the which withall is expressed and declared the Nature of all Things: So that it is no wonder that we are not so eloquent in other Languages, the which we know that they are altogether disagreeing to the Languages of our forefathers, *Adam* and *Enoch*, and were through the Babylonical Confusion wholly hidden.

But we must also let you understand, that there are yet some *Eagles Feathers* in our way, the which do hinder our purpose. Wherefore we do admonish every one for to read diligently and continually the holy *Bible*; for he that taketh all his pleasures therein, he shall know that he prepared



for himself an excellent way to come in to our *Fraternity*: For as this is the whole sum and content of our Rule, That every Letter or Character which is in the World ought to be learned and regarded well; so those are like unto us, and are very near allyed unto us, who do make the holy *Bible* a Rule of their life, and an aim and end of all their studies; yea to let it be a *Compendium* and Content of the whole World: And not only to have it continually in the mouth, but to know how to apply and direct the true understanding of it to all times and Ages of the World. Also, it is not our Custom to prostitute and make so common the holy *Scriptures*; for there are innumerable Expounders of the same; some alledging and wresting it to serve for their Opinion, some to scandal it, and most wickedly do liken it to a Nose of Wax, which alike should serve the *Divines*, *Philosophers*, *Physicians* and *Mathematicians*, against all the which we do openly witness and acknowledg, That from the beginning of the World there hath not been given unto Men a more worthy, a more excellent, and more admirable and wholesom Book then the holy *Bible*; Blessed is he that hath the same, yea more blessed is he who reads it diligently, but most blessed of all is he that truly understandeth the same, for he is most like to God, and doth come most near to him. But whatsoever hath been said in the *Fama* concerning the Deceivers against the Transmutation of *Mettals*, and the highest *Medicine* in the World, the same is thus to be understood, that this is so great gift of God we do in no manner set at naught, or despise it. But because she bringeth not with her always the knowledg of *Nature*, but this bringeth forth not only *Medicine*, but also maketh manifest and open unto us innumerable *Secrets* and *Wonders*; Therefore it is requisite, that we be earnest to attain to the understanding and knowledg of *Philosophy*. And moreover, excellent Wits ought not to be drawn to the Tincture of *Mettals*, before they be exercised well in the knowledg of *Nature*. He must needs be an unsatiable Creature, who is come so far, that neither Poverty nor Sicknesse can hurt him; yea, who is exalted above all other men, and hath Rule over that, the which doth anguish, trouble and pain others, yet will give himself again to idle things, as to build houses, make Wars, and use all manner of Pride, because he hath of Gold and Silver infinite store.

God is far otherwise pleased, for he exalteth the *lowly*, and pulleth down the *proud* with disdain; to those which are of *few words* he sendeth his holy Angel to speak with them, but the *many worded* he driveth in the Wilderness and solitary places: The which is the right Reward of the

*Romish Seducers*, who have vomitted forth their *Blasphemies* against *Christ*, and as yet do not abstain from their Lyes in this clear shining Light: In *Germany* all their Abominations and detestable Tricks have been disclosed, that thereby he may fully fulfill the measure of sin, and draw near to the end of his punishment. Therefore one day it will come to pass, that the Mouth of those Vipers will be stopped, and the three double Horn will be brought to nought, as thereof at our Meeting shall more plain and at large be discoursed.

For Conclusion of our *Confession*, we must earnestly admonish you, that you put away, if not all, yet the most Books written by false *Alchemists*, who do think it but a Jest, or a Pastime, when they either misuse the holy *Trinity*, when they do apply it to vain things, or deceive the people with most strange Figures, and dark Sentences and Speeches, and cozen the simple of their money; as there are now adays too many such Books set forth, which the Enemy of Mans Welfare doth dayly, and will to the end, mingle among the good Seed, thereby to make the Truth more difficult to be beleaved, which in her self is simple, easie, and naked; but contrarily Falshood is proud, haughty, and coloured with a kind of Lustre of seeming godly and of humane Wisdom. Ye that are wise eschew such Books, and turn unto us, who seek not your moneys, but offer unto you most willingly our great *Treasures*: We hunt not after your Goods with invented lying *Tinctures*, but desire to make you Partakers of our Goods: We speak unto you not by *Parables*, but would willingly bring you to the right, simple, easie, and ingenuous Expositions Understanding, Declaration and Knowledg of all *Secrets*. We desire not to be received of you, but invite you unto our more than Kingly Houses and Palaces, and that verily not by our own proper motion, but (that you likewise may know it) as forced unto it, by the Instigation of the Spirit of God, by his Admonition, and by the Occasion of this present time.

What think you, loving people, and how seem you affected, seeing that you now understand and know, That we acknowledg our selves truly and sincerely to profess *Christ*, condemn the *Pope*, addict our selves to the true *Philosophy*, lead a *Christian life*, and dayly call, intreat and invite many more unto our *Fraternity*, unto whom the same Light of God likewise appeareth? Consider you not at length how you might begin with us, not only by pondering the Gifts which are in you, and by experience which you have in the Word of God, beside the careful Consideration of

the Imperfection of all *Arts*, and many other unfitting things, to seek for an amendment therein; to appease God, and to accommodate you for the time wherein you live. Certainly if you will perform the same, this profit will follow, That all those Goods which *Nature* hath in all parts of the World wonderfully dispersed, shall at one time altogether be given unto you, and shall easily disburden you of all that which obscureth the Understanding of Man, and hindereth the working thereof, like unto the vain *Epicides*, and Excentrick *Astronomical Circles*.

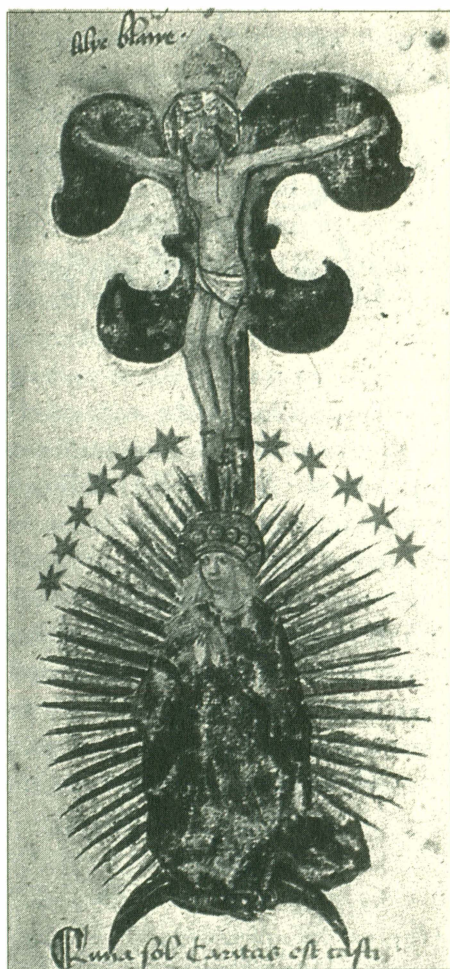
But those Pragmatical and busie-headed men, who either are blinded with the glistering of Gold, or (to say more truly) who are now honest, but by thinking such great Riches should never fail, might easily be corrupted, and brought to Idleness, and to riotous proud living: Those we do desire that they would not trouble us with their idle and vain crying. But let them think, that although there be a *Medicine* to be had which might fully cure all Diseases, nevertheless those whom God hath destinated to plague with Diseases, and to keep them under the Rod of Correction, such shall never obtain any such *Medicine*.

Even in such manner, although we might inrich the whole World, and endue them with Learning, and might release it from Innumerable Miseries, yet shall we never be manifested and made known unto any man, without the especial pleasure of God; yea, it shall be so far from him whosoever thinks to get the benefit, and be Partaker of our Riches and Knowledg, without and against the Will of God, that he shall sooner lose his life in seeking and searching for us, then to find us, and attain to come to the wished Happiness of the *Fraternity* of the *Rosie Cross*.

1.

*The Grail and  
the Rose*

JOHN MATTHEWS



*Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit, early 15th century.*



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HE GRAIL AND THE ROSE: two streams of wisdom flowing side by side, sometimes entering the same channel and flowing together, sometimes separating again to lead into different enchanted byways of the soul. It seems particularly appropriate to be discussing these interrelated themes only a few miles from the castle of Karlstein, which has associations with both subjects and, in a sense, conjoins them as I hope to do here.

To begin with the Grail: this is surely one of the supreme symbols of the quest for absolutes—truth, wisdom, healing, union with the Beyond—to come out of the Western mystery tradition. It begins obscurely with the twelfth-century poem *Perceval, ou le conte du Graal* by the French poet Chrétien de Troyes.<sup>1</sup> But in the hundred years from approximately 1200 to 1300, it was the most popular strand of all that collection of wonder myths known collectively as the “Matter of Britain”—the cycle of tales and poems centering around the figure of the great medieval image of King Arthur. Before this, the origins of the Grail recede into the mists of Celtic myth and the hero tale and earlier still, into the beginnings of human myth-making, with the image of the crater, the mixing bowl of the gods from which the very stuff of creation was poured forth. In this, it prefigures its later incarnation in the *vas spirituale*, the vessel in which the alchemists wrought their mysteries of the spirit.

But it is with the medieval, and specifically Christian, incarnation of the Grail that we are concerned here—as the chalice in which some of the holy blood of Christ was caught and which was used in the first great celebration of the Christian mysteries of the Eucharist. Here we already see aspects of the theme that will later find restatement in the mysteries of alchemy and

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1. Chrétien de Troyes, *Conte du Graal*, N. Bryant, trans., D. S. Brewer, 1982.

their subsequent importance to the Rosicrucian Enlightenment. From the beginning, the Grail was a vessel that contained some of the divinity of God, the blood that is symbolized by the wine in the Eucharistic imagery. And it is the very embodiment of that transubstantiation in the mystery of the Eucharist. In the intensity of the Christian interpretation, it is also the womb of Mary, in which the divine seed is transmuted into the body of the infant Christ. Thus Mary herself, in the great medieval *Litany of Loretto*, is praised as

*vas spirituale,  
vas honorabile,  
vas insigne devotionis...*

spiritual vessel,  
vessel of honor,  
singular vessel of devotion...<sup>2</sup>

In effect, Mary has become a *living* Grail, a vessel in which the blood and essence of Christ are both contained. The *Litany* makes this point even more powerfully when it calls the Virgin

Cause of our joy  
Ark of the Covenant  
Tower of David  
Tower of Ivory,  
House of Gold,  
Seat of Wisdom  
Mirror of Justice,  
Queen of Prophets....<sup>3</sup>

Each of these titles reflects an aspect of the Grail. For it was also a vessel of the spirit and devotion, a cause of joy to those who came into its presence, an Ark of the New Covenant between God and humanity. It is also associated with a house of gold (the temple of the Grail), with a seat of

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2. Quoted in John Matthews, *The Grail: Quest for the Eternal*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1981.

3. *Ibid.*

wisdom (the Siege Perilous in which only the one destined to achieve the mysteries of the Grail may sit), and with prophecy, an aspect specifically attributed to it in the medieval German poem *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach.

In the full spectrum of medieval symbolism, Mary is Queen of Heaven as well as mirror, vessel, house of gold, and star of the sea. Her supreme symbol is the Rose—Rose of the World, Rosa Alchemica. She is Queen of the Most Holy Rose Garden in which the Grail lies hidden. As Wolfram von Eschenbach puts it, the Grail is

*The Wondrous thing hidden in the flower-garden of the king where  
the elect of all nations are called.*<sup>4</sup>

The mysteries of Mary, represented in Catholic tradition by the rosary, are arranged in multiples of five: five decades (or tens) repeated three times, a total of fifteen decades. Five was thus the number of Marian devotion. The rose was always depicted in symbolic representation with five petals; Christ was wounded five times, in the hands and feet and side; the Grail underwent five changes, "the nature of which no one ought to speak," according to the thirteenth-century Grail text known as the *Perlesvaus*.<sup>5</sup> The last of these changes is into the form of a child—a restatement of the divinity held by the vessel of the spirit. Finally, in the elaborate and extraordinary symbolism of courtly love—the medieval dream that placed the woman on a pedestal while making her the subject of adulterous passion—the Rose Garden was the place where the beloved awaits the coming of the lover, who must pluck the Rose in order to achieve his desire.

All of this can be interpreted in both mystical and alchemical fashion. According to Catholic doctrine, Mary is the vessel in which the divine child is brought to term. In alchemical symbolism, the *vas mirabile* is the vessel in which the Mercurious—the burning child brought forth by the spiritual wedding of the elements—finds manifestation. The coming together of the lover and the beloved is the same allegory of divine love extolled by Dante, who fully understood the symbolism of the Rose. In the *Paradiso*, he makes the Rose the final symbol of revelation and union with

4. Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, trans. A. Hatto, London: Penguin Books, 1981.

5. *Perlesvaus*, N. Bryant, trans., D. S. Brewer, 1975.



the divine, granted to him at the behest of Bernard of Clairvaux, who prays for the intercession of the Virgin. The symbolism is interchangeable here; it works as well for profane (courtly love), sacred (the Marian impulse), and alchemical (the birth of the wondrous child).

Thus the infinite is born into the finite, Christ becomes human, and the spiritual transformations of the Grail and the alembic are shown to be the same. As St. Ephraem wrote in the fourth century, invoking Christ:

In the womb that bore you are Fire and Spirit,  
Fire and Spirit are in the river where you were baptized,  
Fire and Spirit are in our baptism too,  
And the Bread and Cup are Fire and Spirit.<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that we find the troubadours, who fueled the Arthurian myths with their burning and joyful light, referring to Mary as the "Grail of the World" and applying the term with equal validity to the Lady of the Rose Garden, where "The beloved one is the Heart's Grail, her lover will not be alone, for she is to him the highest Grail, which protects from every woe."<sup>7</sup>

Much of this symbolism is Catholic and founded on Catholic doctrine, though it also embodies a recognition of the importance of the divine feminine at a time when the established Church was exoterically opposed to it. Devotion to Mary, while never criticized, was considered secondary to devotion to Christ. The Grail stories, it seems, were giving voice to an undercurrent of belief that harked back to pre-Christian times, when devotion to the feminine principle—the Great Goddess—was either as important or more important than that to the God. The Grail's own pagan heritage focuses this in a number of ways—by the implicit femininity of its form—the cup or vessel, and in the story of Dindrane, the only female Grail quester of whom we have knowledge. Sister to Percival, one of the three knights who achieved the mystery of the Grail, Dindrane not only foresees the coming of the sacred vessel in a vision but actually sets forth in search of it. Her death is a parable of the feminine mystery—and of the Grail and the Rose.

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6. John Matthews, *The Grail*.

7. Lizette A. Fisher, *The Mystic Vision in the Grail Legend & The Divine Comedy*, AMS Press, 1966.

Joining the three knights in their quest, Dindrane gives up her life to save another, giving her lifeblood to heal a woman suffering from leprosy. The blood that is taken is symbolic of the monthly blood loss of all women, the blood of the Grail, and of the death of the Rose. Charles Williams, a modern Grail poet, puts it magnificently in the poem significantly entitled "Taliesin in the Rose Garden."

Taliesin is the magical poet of Celtic tradition, and in these lines he draws together a knot of symbolism—of the Grail itself and of the suffering of the wounded king, the guardian of the sacred chalice whose wounds continue to bleed until he can find healing—something that can be brought about only by the successful accomplishment of the Grail quest itself. Here is Williams:

Woman's flesh lives the quest of the Grail  
in the change from Camelot to Carbonek and from Carbonek to Sarra,  
puberty to Carbonek, and the stanching, and Carbonek to death.  
Blessed is she who gives herself to the journey.<sup>8</sup>

The late Helen Luke, a brilliant Jungian analyst, says of these lines:

Williams hints at the inner identity of the woman's menstrual blood, which tells her that she has not yet conceived, with the blood of the wounded Grail king, bleeding because he cannot bring to life the new consciousness of the Christ, the Self.... Taliesin speaks of how woman may consciously give birth to the new keeper of the Grail, within herself, and so heal the wound in the psyche.<sup>9</sup>

Again, the message is alchemical, and would, I believe, have found a receptive chord among those who gave voice to the Rosicrucian Enlightenment. They, who emerged from the new Protestant order, which rebelled against the strictures of Roman Catholicism, also gave birth to a new myth that, borrowing from the older story of the Grail, gave form to a new quest—for the mystery of Christian Rosenkreutz and the Rosicrucian vault.

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8. Charles Williams, *Arthurian Poems*, D. L. Dodds, ed., Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 1994.

9. Helen Luke, "The Return of Dindrane," in *At the Table of the Grail*, John Matthews, ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

At the end of the Arthurian era, in terms of literature and the pursuit of the quest, the Grail vanished for a time. As Adam McLean rightly noted in his contribution to a collection of essays that I edited some years ago:

The Grail mystery returned underground, wrapped itself again in its esotericism and waited for another time to unfold its inner revelation. Such a point was reached after the Reformation, when the inner Grail mystery ... surfaced again in the Rosicrucian movement of the early seventeenth century. At this time ... the Rosicrucians tried to incarnate an esoteric Christianity within the Protestant movement ... in order to provide a much needed resolution of the polarities of Protestantism. Thus we should see the Rosicrucian movement as being inwardly related to the Grail mystery. The spiritual alchemy that was the esoteric foundation of Rosicrucianism can be seen as a development of the Grail impulse.<sup>10</sup>

This is indeed the case, and in the symbolism of the Rosicrucian Wedding we see an unfolding of the original Grail story in a new form. As so often in the past, and again in recent times, an outwardly rigid spirituality is underpinned by an esoteric core. The Rosicrucian movement is just such an esoteric resonance, flowering within Protestantism, just as the Grail myths flowered within the outwardly patriarchal form of Catholicism. In the examination of the primary text of that movement, *The Chymical Wedding*, I follow a line of reasoning first set forth by my wife in her essay, "The Rosicrucian Vault as Sepulchre and Wedding Chamber," first published in 1985.<sup>11</sup>

*The Chymical Wedding* is a rosary—a mystical sequence, in this instance, of seven beads in which Christian Rosenkreutz gathers the roses of Lady Venus's wealth. Each day is a petal in the Rose that surrounds him—the Rose that is here called the vault. At the center of the Rose is the hierogamy [sacred marriage] of Christian Rosenkreutz and the Lady Venus, for although the text is assumed to be about the symbolic marriage of the king

10. Adam McLean, "Alchemical Transmutation in History & Symbolism," in *At the Table of the Grail*.

11. Caitlin Matthews, "The Rosicrucian Vault as Sepulcher and Wedding Chamber," in *The Underworld Initiation* by R. J. Steward, Aquarian Press, 1985.

and queen, in fact the title is descriptive of the spiritual coming together of Christian Rosenkreutz and the Lady Venus.

If we turn the pages that lead up to Christian Rosenkreutz's secret hierogamy, we glimpse the real person who, though his hair is gray, and he accounts himself no longer young, shares the same innocent earnestness as Perceval in the Grail myths at the outset of the quest. Here is one who would sell all that he has for the possession of the pearl of wisdom and who suffers the rigors of his initiation into wisdom with the greatest humility and determination. His approach is ideal for a candidate toward initiation, unaware that, although he has been invited to a royal wedding, he himself is the groom. In the same way, Perceval sets out to find the Grail and is at once the guest in the castle where it is hidden—though he does not know—and sets out on a quest that will take him full circle, back to the point of his beginning.

Christian Rosenkreutz and Perceval both suffer the lot of all humankind. They are thrust into incarnation, into the captivity of matter, where they are yoked to their fellows by the service they both offer to the quest. We see this in *The Chymical Wedding* on Day One, when Christian Rosenkreutz dreams that he emerges from his dungeon with the help of an "ancient matron."<sup>12</sup> He is wounded in such a manner that blood covers him from head to foot. He is released from the dungeon by the ancient matron and told that he should be proud of his wounds and "keep them for my sake." There are echoes here of the Christlike Perceval and of the wounded Fisher King of the Grail.

Christian Rosenkreutz arrays himself for the wedding with crossed red bands over his breast and four red roses in his hat. These roses proclaim his loyalty to the Goddess and show that, for all its Protestant veneer, *The Chymical Wedding* is, in fact, an exposition of the mysteries of Venus, which can be traced back both to the practices of pagan Europe and through the Grail myth itself in the parallels between the Venusburg of German folklore and the Holy Mountain (Muntsalvache) of Rosicrucian and Grail myths.

The roses themselves are a clear indication of the initiate's dedication to his task. As A. Bothwell Grosse says in his study, *The Rose Immortal*:

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12. *The Chymical Wedding*, E. Foxcroft, trans.

The disciple, servant of the Rose and of the Cross, progressing along the narrow Path and passing through the narrow gateway of Initiation, keeps ever before his eyes the Goal, remote at first, but ever growing nearer. From the beginning he has been pledged to the finding of Unity, for Unity stands at the end of the Path.<sup>13</sup>

And that path leads inevitably upward to the Mountain of Salvation, the place of mystery, the site of the Grail temple, where the unutterable mysteries of unity with the beloved are celebrated.

Suffering is a part of that path. Just as Christian Rosenkreutz suffers in *The Chymical Wedding*, so does Lancelot in the Grail story. The great worldly knight comes to the doorway of the chapel of the Grail and looks within. There he sees "a table of silver, and the Holy Vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it... and before the Holy Vessel... a good man clothed like a priest. And it seemed he was at the sacring of the Mass."<sup>14</sup> Watching the events that unfold, Lancelot sees the celebrant holding aloft the image of a man, bleeding from hands and feet and side, as though he would make an offering at the altar. And when it seems as though the man might fall from the effort, Lancelot enters the chamber out of a simple desire to help. But he is struck down by a fiery breath and blinded by the light that flows from the Grail. For Lancelot is a fallen man and does not know his way into the presence of the Grail. Christian Rosenkreutz, looking upon the form of Lady Venus, is likewise blinded—by the Goddess's radiance.

Both of these events happen in a temple of the Mysteries, and it is in the account of two such temples—one devoted to the Grail and the other to the Rosicrucian Mysteries—that we find further analogies and links between the Grail and the Rose. The earliest traditions relating to temple-building depict them as dwelling places of deity, where the creator, god or goddess, invited to enter his or her house, may choose to communicate with the created. The earth upon which the temple stands is thereby made holy—either through its being placed in that spot or by the hallowing that takes place through the touch of the divine and which, in a sense, "calls

13. A. Bothwell-Gosse, *The Rose Immortal*, J. Watkins, 1958.

14. Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, N.Y. University Books, 1961; *sacring* is the consecration of the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

forth" the building as a marker for those in search of the sacred experience. It becomes, in effect, a *temenos*, a place set apart, where an invisible line shows that here divinity lives and that to enter this space means to enter the sphere of the divine, the reflection of heaven on earth.

The imagery of the Grail temple is consistent throughout the texts in which it appears. It is usually situated at the top of a mountain, which is in turn surrounded either by an impenetrable forest or by deep water. Access, if any, is by way of a perilously narrow bridge. To make entry even harder, the whole temple, or the castle that contains it, may revolve rapidly, making it almost impossible to gain entry by normal means. Once within, more perils await, and for those few who succeed in reaching the center, the heart of the Grail-Rose, the experience could, as in the case of Lancelot, be both perilous and chastening.

The most completely developed description of the medieval Grail temple is to be found in the Middle High German poem *Der Jungere Titurel* (ca. 1270), attributed to Alberecht von Scharfenburg.<sup>15</sup> Here the lineage of the Grail knights is traced back to Solomon. According to Alberecht, Titurel, the grandfather of the famous Grail knight Perseval, was fifty when an angel appeared to him and announced that the rest of his life was to be dedicated to the service of the Grail. Accordingly, he was led to a wild forest from which sprang the Mountain of Salvation, where he found workers gathered from all over the world who were to help him build a castle and temple to house the sacred vessel.

Titurel set to work and leveled the top of the mountain, which he found to be made of onyx. Soon after, he found the ground plan of the temple mysteriously engraved on this fabulous surface. The completion of the temple took some thirty years, during which time the Grail provided not only substance from which it was built but also food to sustain the workers. The Grail is thus seen to participate directly in the creation of its own temple, as perhaps the followers of Christian Rosenkreutz did in the creation of the vault. There, the uncorrupted body of Christian Rosenkreutz lies in suspended animation, just as the body of the wounded Fisher King is preserved in the Grail temple.

The allegory here is dense, but perceivable. The image of the temple as vessel, containing the holy matter of creation, relates to a fundamental

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15. Alberecht von Scharfenburg, *Der Jungere Titurel*, W. Wolfe, ed., Berlin, 1983.

aspect of both the Grail temple and the Rosicrucian vault—the idea of the temple within or, as we might say, the Grail as bodily vessel. This notion has been a common one since the earliest times. In the *Chandoga Upanishad* it is said that

in the center of the Castle of Brahma, our own body, there is a small shrine, in the form of a lotus flower, and within can be found a small space. We should find who dwells there and want to know him ... for the whole universe is in him and he dwells within our heart. (8:1:1–2)

One might also say that in the center of the castle of the Grail, or the vault of Christian Rosenkreutz, which is our own body, there is a shrine, and within it is the Rose, the symbol of the Grail of the heart. We should indeed seek to know and understand that inhabitant of ourselves. It is the fragment of the divine contained within each of us, the light that shines within everyone. The true quest of the Grail consists in bringing this rosy light to the surface, nourishing and feeding it until its radiance can be seen by all. But the way is hard, and the mountain steep, guarded by wild animals and powerful otherworldly opponents. In the Grail myths this takes the form of such challenging figures as the Black Maiden, sometimes called Kundry, who appears from time to time to urge the Grail knights on their way when they are beginning to fall by the wayside. However, it is the mountain that remains the most fearsome and terrible trial.

In Rosicrucian terms, we have the famous Rosicrucian allegory, *The Holy Mountain*, which has been attributed to Thomas Vaughan. Here we find the following description:

There is a mountain situated in the midst of the earth or centre of the world, which is both small and great. It is soft, yet also above measure hard and stony. It is far off and near at hand, but by the providence of God, invisible. In it are hidden the most ample treasures, which the world is not able to value. This mountain—by envy of the devil, who always opposes the glory of God and the happiness of man—is compassed about with very cruel beasts and ravening birds—which make the way thither both difficult and dangerous.<sup>16</sup>

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16. *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, compiled and edited by Paul M. Allen, Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1981.

If you succeed in daring all these perils, in recognizing that the mountain is not just a mountain and the treasure not just a treasure, you will find that

the most important thing [on the Mountain] and the most powerful, is a certain exalted Tincture, with which the world—if it served God and were worthy of such gifts—might be touched and turned into the most pure gold.

This Tincture ... will make you young when you are old, and you will perceive no disease in any part of your bodies. By means of this Tincture you will find pearls of an excellence which can not be imagined.<sup>17</sup>

This is so like the function of the Grail that it is not hard to believe that its author was directly influenced by the medieval texts—though it is more likely that both are an expression of a hunger for spiritual sustenance. If we turn to one of the most famous and esoterically based of the Grail texts—the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach—we will see at once just how close the two streams are. To begin with, we find the following passage from Wolfram, which, when set alongside the preceding extract from *The Holy Mountain* seems to me to display remarkable similarities. The passage in question is where Wolfram describes the Grail and its effects:

There never can be human so ill but that if he one day sees the stone [that is, the Grail] he cannot die within the week that follows ... and though he should see the stone for two hundred years [his appearance] will never change, save that his hair might perhaps turn gray.<sup>18</sup>

It is not possible here to go into the mystery of the Grail as it is presented in this text in any detail. It is important, however, to know that here the sacred object is described, uniquely, as a “stone of the purest kind ... called *lapsit exillas*.” This phrase has been taken to be a reference to the *lapis philosophorum*, the philosophers’ stone, the pursuit of which occupied the minds and energies of generations of medieval and Rosicrucian alchemists alike and which symbolized the ultimate completion of the Great Work. If we consider alchemy here to mean a spiritual rather than chemical process, we will see how apt the analogy is. The Grail transforms those who come

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17. *Ibid.*

18. *Parzival*, A. Hatto, trans.



into its presence. It preserves their bodies and extends their lives indefinitely. It feeds the hunger of the spirit that is present within every seeker. It is an alembic in which the transformation of base material into spiritual gold takes place—in other words, it is an expression of the Great Work, of the Resurrection, and of the flowering of the Rose and the Grail, which takes place in both the medieval romances and the Rosicrucian allegories.

But there is yet another parallel between the story told by Wolfram and one of the most fundamental aspects of the Rosicrucian movement. In *Parzival* we read:

As to those who are appointed to the Grail [that is, to be its guardians] hear how they are made known. Under the top edge of the Stone an inscription announces the name and lineage of the one summoned to make the glad journey.... Those who are now full-grown all came here as children. Happy the mother of any child destined to serve there! Rich and poor alike rejoice if a child of theirs is summoned and they are bidden to send it to that Company! Such children are fetched from many countries and forever are immune from the shame of sin and have a rich reward in Heaven.<sup>19</sup>

This, it seems to me, is so much in the spirit of that other great Rosicrucian document, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, in which we learn of the existence of a brotherhood selected and called by God to bear witness to the great mystery of Christian Rosenkreutz and whose task is to remain hidden until the time when the world is ready for their message. Robert Fludd, in his defense of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, makes the connection even clearer:

Here then you have that House or Palace of Wisdom erected on the Mount of Reason. It remains, however, to learn who are those... to whom this House is open. These most fortunate of men and their spiritual house are described by the Apostle in the following manner: "To whom come, as unto a living stone... [the] chosen of God... [to whom] are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God.... A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy community, a ransomed people, that you should

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19. *Ibid.*

practice the virtues of him who has called you out of darkness into his royal light. For previously you were not a people, but now you are the people of God."<sup>20</sup>

This is certainly an echo of the "Christian progeny bred to a pure life [who] have the duty of keeping [the Grail]" in Wolfram's poem. They are summoned to their task in the same way as the young knights in another Arthurian Grail text, the *Perlesvaus*, who long after the mysteries of the Grail are over in that age, hear rumors of the existence of the Castle of Wisdom and set forth in search of it:

They were fair knights indeed, very young and high spirited and they swore they would go, and full of excitement they entered the castle. They stayed there a long while, and when they left they lived as hermits, wearing hair-shirts and wandering through the forests, eating only roots; it was a hard life, but it pleased them greatly, and when people asked them why they were living thus, they would only reply: "Go where we went, and you will know why."<sup>21</sup>

This is the essential experience that those who seek the Grail have been undergoing ever since. It is this that sends thousands to the little town of Glastonbury in Somerset every year—where the Grail was supposedly brought by Joseph of Arimathea—in search of the mystery that has reached out far beyond the simple story written down in the twelfth century by Chrétien de Troyes. It has, in fact, brought us together in this castle, under the sign of the rose, just as those first disciples of Christian Rosenkreutz met together to discuss the mystery of their founder.

The alchemist Arnold of Vilanova said, "Make a round circle and you have the philosophers' stone." The Grail, whether a stone, a cup, a container, or that which is contained within, remains at the center of the circle, like the Rose at the center of the *Hortus Conclusus*, the mysterious Rose Garden of the beloved. But the center is also the circumference, and all quests lead to this place of hallowing. The knights in their wanderings, like the disciples of Christian Rosenkreutz, attain the goal that would

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20. *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*.

21. *Perlesvaus*, N. Bryant, trans.

have remained inaccessible had they gone purposely to the Grail castle by a direct route. In surrendering themselves to chance, they are enabled to make their way to the heart of the mystery—where some at least recognize the truth, pluck the rose, or drink from the cup of truth.

I said at the beginning that it was especially appropriate to be discussing the Grail here in this place, not far from the castle of Karlstein, which is indeed only twelve miles from Prague, situated on a wooded hill near the river Beroun.<sup>22</sup> Karlstein was built between 1348 and 1365, soon after the first flowering of Grail literature, by the German king and Bohemian emperor Charles IV, whose life and work prefigure that of the later monarchs of Bohemia who fostered the work of the Rosicrucian Enlightenment. Described by Rudolf Steiner as “the last initiate on the throne of the Emperors,” Charles understood the connection between the Rose and the Grail perhaps better than anyone before or since. Karlstein was consciously built to reflect this.

The following description shows just how deeply the two themes become one in this place.

The adornment of the walls in the various chapels to be found in the castle, with their quantities of semi-precious stones and gold, the way in which the light is diffused through these semi-precious stones which—set in gilded lead—take the place of window glass, lead one to conclude that Charles IV knew about the [esoteric] powers of precious stones and gold. The small chapel of St. Catherine, for example, is a veritable gem. The entire walls, up to the ceiling, are inlaid with semi-precious stones, such as amethyst, jasper, cornelian, and agate, while the cross vaulting above has a blue background, adorned with roses, according to the Rosicrucian motif. According to tradition, it was here that Charles IV withdrew every year from Good Friday to Easter Sunday in order to meditate in undisturbed privacy.<sup>23</sup>

This period is, of course, associated not only with the period of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ but also with the Grail mysteries,

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22. See Carlo Pietzner's introduction to *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*.

23. Ita Wegman, “On Castle Karlstein and Its Rosicrucian Connections,” *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*.

which took place at the same time. This is reflected in the design of the castle in a number of ways. Throughout the building are murals that reflect the shape of the Rosicrucian initiation—the releasing of the prisoner from his chains, the sowing of seed in darkness, its milling and baking (all aspects of the alchemical process), the burial of the dead, the feast that reminds us of the wedding banquet in *The Chymical Wedding*, and finally execution and dismemberment.

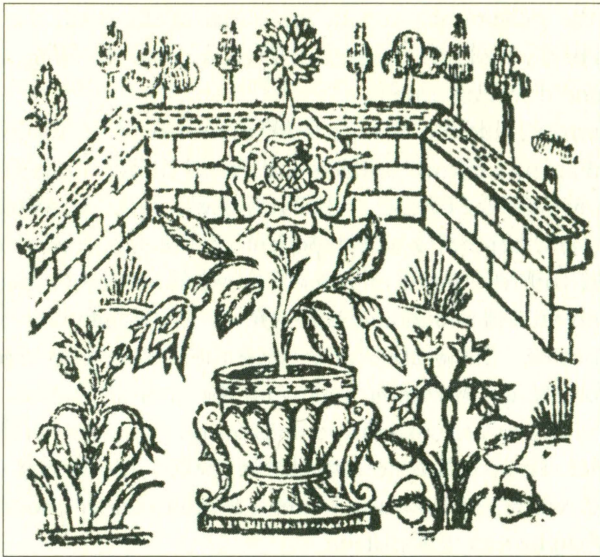
These images guide the seeker toward the tower of the castle, which is approached across a narrow bridge—the Sword Bridge of the Grail story. Within the tower is the Chapel of the Holy Cross, again decorated in semi-precious stones, beneath a roof representing the sun, moon, and stars, interspersed with the motif of roses. The windows are formed of pure topaz, amethyst, and almandine, through which the light enters in bands of glorious color. The symbolism is clear: the initiate goes through life, learning, forgetting, relearning, following the path of spiritual alchemy, finally becoming able to cross the perilous bridge and enter the chamber of the mysteries. The parallels need hardly be spelled out. This *is* the chapel of the Grail, where the Rose also blooms. Rudolf Steiner understood this precisely when he said of Karlstein:

I was recently in a castle in Central Europe in which there is a chapel, and where one can find, symbolized, thoughts from the turning point of this new era. In the entire stairway there are rather primitive paintings; but, although the paintings are primitive, what do we find painted throughout the whole stairway? *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz!* One walks through this Chymical Wedding, finally reaching the Chapel of the Grail.<sup>24</sup>

Here, indeed, not too far from where we are now, the two themes with which we began—the Grail and the Rose—come together. To seek one is to seek the other. To follow one form of enlightenment is to find another. The Rose blossoms within and from the Grail—Rosicrucianism stems from the root of the Grail myths as a natural outgrowth of the spiritual search.

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24. *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, p. 15.

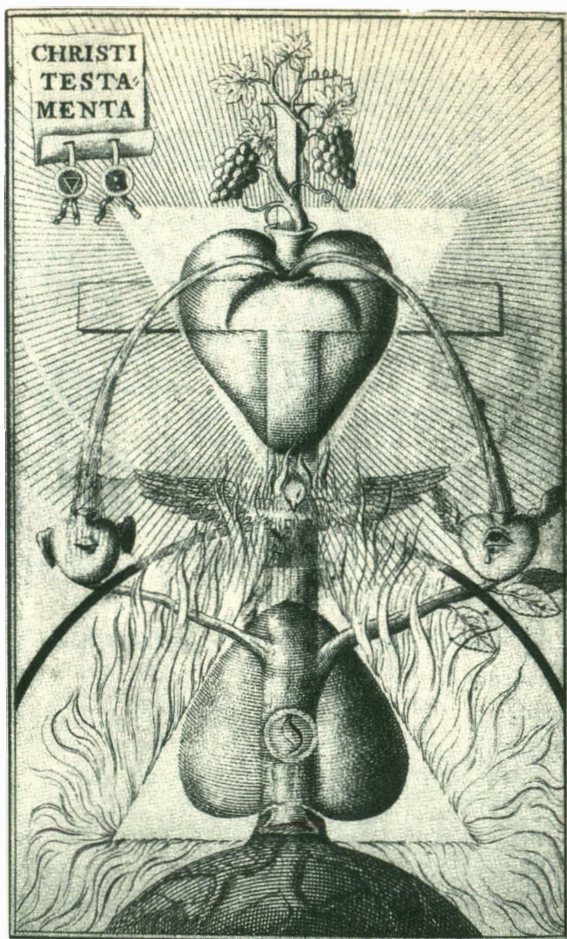


A papermaker's watermark, ca. 16th century.

2.

*The Meaning  
of the Rose Cross*

CHRISTOPHER BAMFORD



Jakob Böhme, *Theosophische Wercke*, Amsterdam, 1682.



THE ROSE CROSS challenged the early seventeenth century as a mystery, a question, and a promise. Indeed, if we are to be true to it and honest with ourselves, we must confess that, despite an enormous and proliferating bibliography on the subject, it still perplexes us today. Announcing itself as the hidden, symbolic center of a general reformation of science, art, and religion, the symbol of the Rose Cross arose in human consciousness in a paradoxical, uncertain time marked by religious strife, spiritual renaissance, burgeoning nationalism, individualism, cloak-and-dagger politics, and imminent apocalypse. At the time, this compound of conditions and motives caused confusion, outrage, and fanatical enthusiasm in equal measure. It still does so today. The historical wounds are by no means healed, nor do human beings seem any wiser than they were.

Thus, one must tread lightly when entering this territory. Conspiracy theories abound. Religious and political ideologies still polarize into opposing stances, making the spiritual communion of humanity seem utopian. Materialism is more rampant than ever; the worshipers of Moloch rule the roost, while atheist humanists flee in terror from anything even suggesting the "occult." Nevertheless, the promise was clear—then, as now. New possibilities still dawn for human consciousness. Now, no less than then, a brave new age still awaits its realization by those who heed the call proclaimed by that emblem of immaculate purity, the Rose Cross.

As a symbol, the meaning of the Rose Cross is necessarily inexpressible in words, incommunicable in that sense, and hence unbetrayable. I can give no secrets away. Yet, the symbol itself is an open secret. Inexplicable though it is, it makes possible its own understanding. If acted upon—that is, if enacted as a rite and allowed to act—it does the inner and the outer work that is its teaching. It does so because a symbol is not a thing but a



synthesis of complements, a paradoxical process, *a way*, something that one must *do*. It embodies an injunction. Do this—conjoin the Cross and the Rose—and you will understand; you will attain what I am, what I do. The traditional derivation of the Greek *rhodon*, “rose,” from *rheein*, “to flow,” makes this active aspect very clear. Able to evoke what it stands for, the symbol is thus available to all. Erudition is not required, only openness of heart. For this reason, the framers of the *Fama* hoped that “it would be set forth in every one’s Mother Tongue, because those should not be defrauded of the knowledge of it, who (although they are unlearned) God hath not excluded.”

The method that I will follow will be that of amplification, both historical and metaphysical. As we delve into the prehistory of this symbol, however, we must never forget that as a true symbol, no human origin can be found for the Rose Cross, for a true symbol by definition is not a human construction but an ontological and cosmic reality. Nevertheless, something may be said. It always can. I shall present one approach; naturally, there are many others.

At first, with the hindsight of four hundred years, the original context in which we encounter the Rose Cross seems clear enough. The marvelous rebirth of embodied beauty, truth, and goodness in a new sacred science and art, made possible by the Christianization of the perennial wisdom and cosmology of the ancient theologians effected by the humanists and magi of the Florentine and Roman academies (and the plethora of secret and semisecret societies it spawned), was in danger of falling apart under the pressures, at once reactionary and progressive, of a rationalist and dogmatic Counter-Renaissance. This Counter-Renaissance, seeking refuge from the bloodshed and instability of the times, would in turn give birth to the need for “intellectual certainty” and what we call, without a trace of irony, *modern* science and philosophy—not to mention modern religion. From this point of view, the Rose Cross stands for a last attempt, before going completely underground, to recapture the high ground and realize, in the form of a universal cultural transformation, what Gemistus Plethon, Marsilio Ficino, Leon Baptista Alberti, Nicholas of Cusa, Francesco Colonna, Pico della Mirandola, and others had only dreamed of some hundred and fifty years before.

There is a certain truth in this. The “Rosicrucian Enlightenment” did in fact arise as a kind of second, northern Renaissance, one stopped in its

tracks by historical and intellectual counter-forces. But this explanation is deceptive for two reasons. First, while certainly resuming and building upon the “renewal of wisdom” associated with the sages of the Quattrocento, the Rosicrucian Enlightenment as envisaged by its framers did not share all the assumptions of the Platonists and really sought to bring something new into human consciousness. This “new” thing, although it can to some extent be explained by invoking the twin names of Paracelsus and Luther, has, as we shall see, other, deeper roots. Second, there is the fact that, from a certain point of view, the initiatory center of the first Renaissance is undoubtedly to be found in the various Italian academies—and these did arise suddenly and mysteriously, as if brought into being intentionally. Nevertheless, there also existed other initiatory wisdom streams, currents, and traditions going back, initially at least, into the Middle Ages, to what is known, in fact, as the “twelfth century Renaissance.” In other words, when we try to understand the meaning of the Rose Cross, what we are faced with is the mystery of the historical process as it is woven from vertical and horizontal, that is, spiritual and historical, modes of transmission. Therefore, to begin with, let us try to unravel some of these. We shall have to cast our net wide, for it is a big fish we are after.

Seeing the only Wise and Merciful God in these latter days hath poured out so richly his mercy and goodness to Humankind, whereby we do attain more and more to the perfect knowledge of his Son Jesus Christ and of Nature, that justly we may boast of the happy time wherein there is not only discovered unto us the half part of the world, which was hitherto unknown and hidden, but He hath also made manifest unto us many wonderful and never-before seen works and creatures of Nature, and, moreover, hath raised human beings, endued with great wisdom, which might partly renew and reduce all arts (in this our spotted and imperfect age) to perfection, so that we might thereby understand our own nobleness and worth, and why we are called microcosmos, and how far our knowledge extendeth in Nature.

So begins the *Fama* or announcement “of Christian intent” of the Fraternity of the Rose Cross (R.C). The founding assumption, as is evident, is the reality of “these latter days” when “the only Wise and Merciful God ... hath poured out so richly his mercy and goodness.”

This assumption is neither new nor unique. Marie des Vallees, for example, who, with Margaret-Mary Alacoque, was the means by which the sacrament of the Sacred Heart was received as a universal consecration in the seventeenth century, was asked by Jesus in a vision to repeat one thing three times. "Whose is it? Where shall I find it?" she asked. Jesus replied, "*Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum* (The Spirit of the Lord will be poured over the orb of the earth)," adding,

This refers to the times when the Holy Spirit will spread the fire of divine love over all the earth and so create his floods. For there are three floods.... The first was the eternal Father's and was a flood of water; the second was the Son's and was a flood of blood; but the third belongs to the Holy Spirit, and will be a flood of fire. It will cause as much unhappiness as the others, for it will find much resistance and much green wood that will be difficult to burn.

In other words, in Catholic France (and there are other examples, as we shall see) we hear a precise echo of the announcement that began to circulate in Lutheran Germany some forty years earlier.

As I say, this was not new. It is as old as Christianity, or older. After all, the apocalyptic side of Christianity is closely linked to Judaism, whose sages and prophets, awaiting the messianic age in fear and hope, endlessly meditated the unfolding reality of God's activity in time and in relation to his people as a unified, divinely predetermined whole. Starting with Lactantius, this same contemplation of the end also gradually filled the Christian West until, by the time of the Middle Ages, the expectation of supernatural, radical change was almost universal. Christ's advent, it was believed, marked a new historical dispensation. More than that, it instituted a new era of creation: a second creation in which the Creator entered creation, transforming it utterly. No longer outside, beyond, and above creation, the Divine was now in creation, dissolving and overturning what had seemed from time immemorial the hierarchic cosmic norms of above and below, inside and out, beginning and end. The Lord of the World had become the King of the Elements. But none of this was yet fully evident. It would not become so, in fact, until the Second Coming, when history would close and, before the curtain of the Last Judgment finally fell, a millennial Golden Age would ensue—signs of whose approach could be read

on every side. As the Rosicrucian *Confessio* says: "God hath most certainly and most assuredly concluded to send and grant to the World before her end, which presently shall ensue, such a Truth, Light, Life, and Glory, as the first Man Adam had."

Medieval Christians thus felt that they were living in an interim period, a kind of endless pause or vacuum between revelations, in which the Church, as an institution, functioned as a kind of antechamber. This was a difficult role, fraught with tension and paradox. In an attempt to defuse these, the Church sought to de-emphasize history in its teaching and discourage apocalypticism among its members, but to little lasting effect, since these were inherent in its teaching and its texts. That this was so burst forth with particular clarity in the twelfth century. The prophecies of Hildegard of Bingen—collected in a text entitled *Pentachronon*, or *Mirror of Future Times*, and much studied by the legendary Trithemius, Abbot of Spondheim—were far more popular than her other writings. And then there was Joachim of Fiore, the influence of whose prophetic understanding permeated the Rosicrucian ambiance of Paracelsus, Dee, Khunrath, Studion, as well as Johann Valentin Andreae and his friends, Christoph Besold and Tobias Hess; the twelfth-century renaissance well understood the imminence of new revelation.

Joachim was born in southern Italy, in Calabria, ancient Magna Graeca, about 1135. Many stories are told of his prophetic gift. As a youth, he is said to have gone on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land where, as he lay thirsting in the desert, he was told in a dream to drink from a river of oil. Awakening, he found the meaning of the Scriptures revealed. Another tale has a vision of the Scriptures with the numerical scheme of their interpretation coming upon him on the Mount of the Transfiguration, Mount Tabor. Yet another has him walking in the gardens at Sambucina, in the early days of his monastic life, and receiving a miraculous draft of inspiration from angelic hands. In all these tales, the illumination was immediate; but behind the immediacy, lay much "laboring on the way" as he struggled to understand the Psalms, the concordance of the Old and New Testaments and their fulfillment in the Apocalypse of Saint John.

The parallels with Luther are unmistakable. Like Luther, Joachim struggled to break through the hard surface of the dead letter to the living Spirit within, seeking the spiritual fruit beneath the skin. But his mind seemed to meet immovable obstacles. The ways of reason availed nothing; prayer,

repentance, repetition of the Psalms seemed the only path this pilgrim could take. Sometimes, after arduous labor, he would lay his task aside; then, if he was lucky, grace would intervene, the stone would roll away, and the light of spiritual intelligence would flood his heart and he would return to the Scriptures and read them with new eyes.

Joachim did not regard his experience of illumination as exceptional, but rather as prophetic. He saw it as a foretaste of the spiritual intelligence that would be poured out on all humanity before the end of history. It had been given to him to understand that just as one spiritual Intelligence united the Old and New Testaments into a single comprehension, so in history the work of God the Father and God the Son must be followed by the work of God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity was thus built into the time process itself. There was an Age (or *Status*) of the Father, then an Age of the Son, and, proceeding from these, the Age of the Spirit—the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, or Paraclete, who testifies of the Word and guides human beings into all truth.

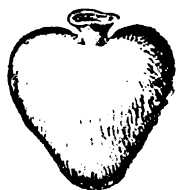
The first age [he writes] was that of knowledge, the second that of understanding, and the third will be the period of complete intelligence. The first was servile obedience, the second filial servitude, and the third will be freedom. The first was affliction, the second action, and the third will be contemplation. The first was fear, the second faith, and the third will be love. The first was the age of slaves, the second the age of sons, and the third will be the age of friends.

Although each age, of course, was to some extent present and active in the others and Joachim's scheme was not straightforwardly linear, his conclusion was nevertheless inevitable: no matter how complex the wheels, or *Rotae* of twos, threes, sevens, and twelves were, history would culminate in the pouring out of the spiritual intelligence of the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation of Christ had no other purpose. Saint Augustine had equated the seven ages of the world with the seven days of creation—five before the Incarnation, the sixth from the Incarnation to his own time; and the seventh, the Sabbath age of rest. When this would begin was, of course, the great question. For the authors of the *Confessio*, who were assiduous students of Joachim's *Rotae*, their own time bore the unmistakable sign that "the Lord Jehovah (who seeing the Lord's Sabbath is almost at hand,

and hastened again to his first beginning, his period or course being finished) doth turn about the course of nature." For Joachim, this Sabbath age coincided with the Third State—that of spiritual humanity. And the fact that he, who was no prophet, magician, or mere speculator, had been able to clearly understand the meaning of the Scriptures, and hence of history itself, merely by the *donum spiritualis intellectus*, the gift of spiritual intelligence, meant that this moment could not be far off. It meant, too, that the Anti-Christ likewise stood in the wings and beside him Elijah, or Elias, the type of the Holy Spirit, who "will come and restore all things" and usher in the great *renovatio*.

There were many signs of its approach. This was the time of the great Grail cycles, the *Tale of Flor and Blanchflor*, and the *Romant de la Rose*. It was also, and not unrelatedly, the time of what is called "the discovery of the individual," from Abelard's discovery of the inner voice of moral responsibility to Aquinas's unfolding of the personality in pure thinking. It marked, too, the dawn of the divine feminine Isis-Sophia-Mary and a new devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the humanity of Jesus—which, as we shall see, are not two, but one. At the School of Chartres, hermetic Platonists, renewing the microcosm-macrocosm analogy, sought to reopen the Book of Nature and create a new sacred science of the Goddess Natura—the Anima Mundi—while Saint Bernard, the spiritual director of the Templars (guardians of the "Holy Land," like the Grail knights) gave evidence in music and architecture of profound Pythagorean understanding. This was the time, too, of the first translations of alchemical texts from Arabic into Latin, beginning with Morienus around 1182, and the time when Moses de Leon compiled the *Zohar*. At the same time, among the Beguines and in the new Cistercian monasteries, or "schools of love"—and what is love but to "profess no other thing than to cure the sick, and that *gratis*"—women mystics were initiating a new, non-dualistic path of love, penetrating the mysteries of the Sacred Heart, and creating a new vernacular devotion to the Eucharist: the sacred blood and body available to all. Meanwhile, the Troubadours and Cathars in the South of France, *fedeli d'amore* both, were drawing together Christian, Ismaili, Manichaean, and Sufi traditions and creating a new, lived, "I"-based vernacular culture for the transformation of the world in the human soul—the rescue of the sparks of light scattered and mixed with darkness in every perception.

Underlying all these various manifestations is a new understanding of the centrality of the heart, the purified soul, and the feminine I (three aspects of a single reality). And thereby, there was also a new understanding of non-dualism, or the complete interpenetration of the individual soul and the world soul, the activity of their interpenetration being the true seat of the "I." All this was a part of the work of divine transformation or deification (spiritualization) of the world, which is the meaning of esoteric Christianity.



LET US BEGIN WITH THE HEART, never forgetting that "Rosicrucian" alchemists like van Helmont—sickened by the verbiage and prattle of the *ratio* and seeking the divine "kiss" that would bring illumination to the unmediated perception of things as they are—spoke of the necessity of cutting off the head. "*Summa scientia nihil scire*" ends *The Chemical Wedding*, affirming that the height of knowledge is to know nothing. The aim was to become a virgin and to give birth to Christ and—in Meister Eckhart's language—to become a human being who is devoid of all foreign images and who is void as that time before he or she was. This is the territory not only of purity of heart but also of poverty of spirit, which the twelfth century realized depended on each other. Thus, the age demanded purification of the soul and the creation of a new, spiritualized heart.

This heart is naturally neither the biological pump nor, metaphorically, the personal seat of affective emotion. In a sense, it is not even personal. To attain it, detachment from all things, all desires, is necessary. We may call it "transpersonal," if we understand transpersonal in the widest sense as extending to the cosmos. In fact, "cosmic" would be a better designation. After all, it is the center of that "globe" whose circumference is nowhere and whose "centrum," or heart, is everywhere. Remember that the *Fama* and the *Confessio* speak of axiomata that lead "like a Globe or Circle to the only middle Point and Centrum" and of "the concurrence of all things to make Sphere or Globe, whose total parts are equidistant from the center." This center is the heart—indeed, the Sacred Heart, the heart of the world. To begin to understand it, however, several hearts must be superimposed.

There is first the "heart of Jesus." Indeed, just before invoking the "Sphere or Globe, whose parts are equidistant from the center," the *Fama*

had spoken of their truth—which is that given to Adam—as “peaceable, brief, and like herself in all things” and “accorded with by *Jesus in omnia parte*”—Jesus in all parts. This is a tradition going back at least to the prophet Ezekiel, to whom the Lord said: “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19). Now, in the last days, in the twelfth century, this was becoming known. “I and Jesus have one heart,” said Saint Bernard, giving the age its seal. Whether or not this was a new revelation, it was received as such by the saints of that time. “I was charged to announce to the Church now being born,” wrote Saint Mechtild of Magdeburg, “the uncreated Word of God and, as for the Sacred Heart, God left it to be known for the end of times when the world would begin to fall into decrepitude to reanimate the flood of his love.”

Everywhere at that time—among troubadours and knights, Platonists and Franciscans, Hermetists, Cathars, and lay brethren, and above all, perhaps, in the monasteries, those laboratories of the soul—Saint Benedict’s ideal, “to the heart and with the unutterable sweetness of love to move down the ways of the commandments of the Lord,” was taken to new heights. The task was to become one with the heart of the world, the divine-human heart of Christ Jesus opened up in the world by the lance of Longinus to become a fountain of living water for the sake of the world’s transformation into the divine body of God. From this opened heart, slain from the foundation of the world, water and blood poured over and into the earth, permeating it, filling it with the spirit of creative love, ennobling it as the growing heart of creation.

In the monastery of Helfta, for instance, Gertrude the Great began her *Spiritual Exercises* in seven books or seven stages—we may call them the seven roses—with the fundamental gesture of the heart’s wisdom: affirmation. “Let my heart bless,” she begins. By this practice of affirmation, the heart becomes true, perfect, whole. Wide open, innocent, it enters into the “penetralia” of Jesus’ heart, living in that “cavern” or “bedchamber”—empty of memory, desire, and understanding—living in dying, void, ever capable of being made anew, stamped, fashioned, modelled on the heart of Jesus. By this, one becomes an organ of creative, loving perception—no longer blind, deaf, and dumb but “converted into a paradise of all virtues and a red berry bush of total perfection.” This is the heart as the whole person, the person as an organ of perception.



Gerhard Dorn, commenting on Trithemius's alchemical treatise says:

First, transmute the earth of your body into water. This means that your heart, which is as hard as stone, material, and lazy must become supple and vigilant.... Then spiritual images and visions impress themselves on your heart as a seal is impressed on wax. But now this liquefaction must transform itself into air. That is to say, the heart must become contrite and humble, rising toward its Creator as air rises toward heaven.... Then, for this air to become fire, desire, now sublimated, must be converted into love—love of God and neighbor—and this flame must never be extinguished. At this point, to receive the power of things above and things below, you must begin the descent.

This is what it is to transform oneself “from dead stones into living philosophical stones.”

A more graphic explanation of what is involved in this schooling of the heart is revealed in the phenomenon of “the exchange of hearts.” This arose also at this time, both in the monasteries and, for instance, among the troubadours, where the exchange of hearts was not with Jesus but with the Lady, the Madonna Intelligenza, the Active Intelligence. Among the monastics, for instance, there is Saint Lutgard of Aywieres who, as a child, had a vision of the humanity of Jesus, the wound in his side bleeding as if recently opened. By this encounter, she became intimate with the Lord, who finally asked her what she wanted. “I want your heart,” she said. “No, rather it is *your* heart *I* want,” replied the Lord. “So be it,” said Saint Lutgard, “but only on condition that your heart’s love is mingled with mine” as wine is with water. “And from that day forth,” her biographer writes, “in the same way as a nurse watches over an infant lest the flies disquiet it, so did Christ hold close to the entrance of her heart.”

Saint Gertrude had a similar experience. Striving to pay complete attention to each note, word, and thing in the liturgy, and failing, hindered by human frailty, she asked, “What profit can there be in a labor in which I am so inconsistent?” Christ, hearing her, gave her “his divine heart in the form of a lighted lamp,” saying: “Here is my heart ... I hold it before the eyes of your heart; it will supply what you lack.” Then Gertrude asked, “How is it that I am aware of your divine heart within me in the form of a

lamp in the midst of my heart and yet, when I approach you, I find it within you?" To which the Lord replied:

Just as you stretch out your hand when you take hold of something and, when you have taken it, you draw it back toward you; so, languishing for love of you, when you are distracted, I stretch out my heart and draw you to me; but when your inmost thoughts are in harmony with mine, and you are recollected and attend to me, then I draw back my heart again, and you with it, into myself, and from it I offer you the pleasure of all virtues.

To begin to understand the significance of all this for the meaning of the Rose Cross, one must realize that what is at issue here, potentially at least, is not only a personal mysticism of union with the divine, but a cosmic transformation, a work of regeneration. For Christians, the Incarnation is a cosmic event. God entered creation itself, became flesh, penetrated the very entrails of matter, so that He might be all in all and the hidden treasure known. God entered creation for the sake of creation itself and as such, not just for the comfort of fallen, skin-bound, human beings, but so that these beings might again assume their cosmological function as cosmic beings, participant co-workers with God, capable of raising up the world and hence also God himself who was now one with it. This is the meaning of Saint Paul's great lines in Romans when he writes:

For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For creation herself waits with eager longing for the revealing of God's children; for creation was subject to futility, not of its own will, but of the will of the one who subjected it. Creation herself will be set free from the bondage of corruption into glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that the whole of creation has been groaning in pain and labor until now. (Rom. 8:18–22)

This is to say that the "dulcet heart of Jesus"—rosy-fleshed Jesus—as invoked by the mystics, is not simply located. Indeed, it is not a thing to be located anywhere. Rather, it is the activity that is the center of all things—the potential center of every perception, the magical fulcrum of

every marvel. This is the meaning of Christ in all things, of Christ, our stone, of the Roses in the Cross.

A further clue is given when we consider the recovery of Sophia, the divine feminine as taught, for instance, by Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), of whom the monk Guibert wrote that no woman since Mary had received so great a gift. Hers was the gift of vision, of being able to see in the reflection of the living light and sometimes in the living light itself. Like Mary, Hildegard was a “poor little figure of a woman” and perhaps it was this that allowed her to recognize that the very humility—Saint Therese of Lisieux would call it “littleness”—of the feminine exalted it over every creature.

For Hildegard, Sophia, whom she calls either Sapientia (Wisdom) or Caritas (Love), is the complex reality, or cosmic glue, that articulates many things we usually keep separate. Primarily, she is the living bond between Creator and creation, God and cosmos. As such, it is through her perpetual mediation that the divine can manifest itself and be known. That is, Sophia lives in the encounter of God and creation, where God stoops to humanity and humanity aspires to God. Primordially, then, it is Sophia who makes possible not only creation itself—she is the cosmogenic, playful companion of the creator, “set up from everlasting . . . a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty . . . the flawless mirror of the active power of God and the image of his goodness.” She also makes possible the Incarnation of that creation in time, namely, the redemption or new creation, which for Hildegard was the center and cause of all, the event for which the world had been made. Finally, this event of Christ’s Incarnation *was* the world for Hildegard, for the process of the Incarnation would not be complete until the entirety of creation had been subsumed in the body of Christ.

This new creation—the union of divinity, humanity, and earth—was, of course, accomplished by a woman, Mary. Thus, Hildegard would say that woman, the feminine, is the means of God’s becoming all-in-all. And this means that the feminine—Sophia: Wisdom and Love—is not limited just to Mary. It extends first to Jesus, the Humanity of Christ—“Jesus, our mother”—and then, by extension, to the “Church”—humanity, the earth—which is, in turn, one with the cosmos itself. Jesus, the crucified Christophore, humanity, matter, the earth, the cosmos, is thus feminized as Sophia, the place where the heart of Christ must come to dwell.

From this perspective, the heart of Jesus and the heart of Mary are one—they are the heart of Sophia—and are also at the same time no other than the heart or center of the cosmos itself. The dawning realization among adepts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, then, was that creating such a heart through the process of radically purifying and transforming the soul (occultists would later call it the “astral” body) made possible the indwelling of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. At its highest level, it was understood that this inner work made possible a renewal of a cosmogenic or Adamic function for humanity. Once the soul was so purified that it was one with Sophia—became Sophia, or Wisdom and Love—the being in whom it was purified was perfected in the three realms of Sophia that are, traditionally, the perfection of the human state. Perfected in these, one becomes “Trismegistus,” master of the three realms. Hildegard has a marvellous antiphon that describes these realms—realms that, through the presence of Christ, become four and one:

O energy of Wisdom,  
encompassing all,  
you circled circling  
in the path of life  
with three wings:  
one flies on high  
one distills from the earth,  
and the third flies everywhere.

Thus we see that Saint Dominic’s institution of the Rosary (encouraged, it is said, by an apparition of the Blessed Virgin herself) and Arnold of Villanova’s alchemical *Rosarium Philosophorum* have more in common than one might suspect. For the symbol of this Sophia—the purified soul with access in the three realms—has always been the Rose. Sixteenth century alchemists knew this and called it the *flos sapientum*;, the flower of wisdom; for them, to accomplish the Great Work was to have “attained the Rose.” Throughout the Middle Ages, the figure of the Rose—*Rosa Mystica*, that rose planted beside the waters—proliferates alarmingly, seemingly used indifferently of Jesus and Mary but in fact always referring to this purified heart of humanity in which the Christ—the center of the world, the immanent transcendent principle—can dwell. In Dante’s words, it is “the Rose wherein the divine Word made itself flesh.”

Here it must be mentioned that the Grail (as René Guénon pointed out, following Charbonneau-Lassay) echoes the kind of symbolism we have been following. From one perspective, the Grail, too, is a kind of heart or flower and belongs to what might be called the prehistory of the Sacred Heart. Guénon was led to this insight by the Egyptian hieroglyphic for the heart, which is a vase or vessel containing the blood of life. Indeed, in several versions of the legend, the Grail is precisely that vessel in which Joseph of Arimathea gathered the first drops of blood that flowed from the wound opened in Christ's side—which is to say, in Guénon's words, that "this cup [the Grail] stands for the Heart of Christ as receptacle of his blood." This "Heart" is the new, incarnated archetype of the "sacrificial Cup" that everywhere represents the Center of the World, "the abode of immortality." As for the Rose, does not this flower too, like all flowers, contain a chalice in its calyx and evoke thereby the idea of a "receptacle." No wonder, then, that we find twelfth-century molds for altar breads that show blood falling in little drops in the form of roses and altar canons where a rose is placed at the foot of the lance down which the sacred blood flows. Nor should we forget that whether it is a cup or dish borne by women, a celestial stone or stone of light (or simply immaterial), the primary virtue of the Grail is a unique, nourishing, healing light—a brightness as of six thousand candles—the light of the Holy Spirit, the Dove, whose coming age Joachim of Fiore first foresaw.

All of this may seem very high-flown—as indeed it is—but it represents "high flying" of a new and revolutionary order. For the background against which these unfolding developments occurred—in a sense, the critical element—was the recovery of the vernacular of lived experience, the mother tongue, what Paracelsus and Van Helmont would call the language of true or certain knowledge.

It is difficult to trace a historical lineage for this movement to uncover the living experiential-perceptual language of the heart buried beneath the mud of dead tongues. Perhaps the earliest intimations are to be found in the *cantigas de amigo* or *Frauenlieder*—love songs in women's voices—that dawned almost simultaneously in the monasteries of the north and in Mozarabic Spain in the ninth and tenth centuries. But the first flowering comes with the culture of the Troubadours and the full blossom with the *Fedeli d'Amore*, whose master, Dante Alighieri, would write a spirited defence of "vulgar eloquence" ("our first true speech") where he shows that

each person's mother tongue represents a development of the primordial language with which Adam discoursed with God and named the things of his experience. Here we find Sufi (and Ismaili), Cathar, Kabbalistic, and esoteric Christian influences flowing together almost in equal measure. At the same time, the vernacular was also employed by the great courtly epics and poems and, above all, the movements of lay spirituality such as the Beguines, Beghards, Lollards, and Waldenses of the twelfth century.

These "little women" and "little brothers without domicile," practicing an apostolic life of poverty, prayer, preaching, healing, and mendicancy—free spirits all, called together by the Holy Spirit rather than the Church of Rome—were "noble travellers," Rosicrucians before the fact. Translating the Bible and reading commentaries in the vernacular in the public square, they created a new mood in Christian piety, that of becoming not just Christlike but one with Christ in nature—taught by him, acting in him, speaking from him. They were condemned in the fourteenth century, but what they had started could no longer be stopped. Penetrating ever deeper into human souls, impelled by such mysterious figures as "Friend of God from the Highlands" (the Incarnation, the Master Jesus himself, according to Rosicrucian tradition), and absorbed and transmitted by Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, Heinrich Suso, Thomas à Kempis, and others, what came to be called the "modern devotion" (*devotio moderna*) arose in such communities as the Brotherhood of the Common Life and Rulman Merwin's Community of the Green Isle and, later still, among the Hussites and the Bohemian Brethren. All of these revolutionary vernacular and visionary spiritualities of common experience embody a new interiority, a new sense of the inwardness of the letter, whether of scripture or of nature—and, hence, as Henry Corbin points out, a new spiritual hermeneutics based upon the heart as the organ and realm of transformative meaning.

This period, too, saw the rise of medieval alchemy, or hermetism, which is perhaps the distinguishing mark of the Rose Cross and whose innermost teaching in many ways parallels the paths of experience opened up by these vernacular spiritual movements. Morienus tells Khalid: "No one will be able to perform or accomplish this thing which you have so long sought, nor attain it by means of any knowledge, unless it be through affection and gentle humility, a perfect and true love." Only a purified heart, according to alchemical teaching, can receive this gift of

God—a *donum dei*, according to the *Summa Perfectionis*—for God alone gives “direct, unerring access to the methods of this science.” He “in his mercy has created this extraordinary thing in yourself.” But God and nature, the human soul and the world soul, in this are one, not two. The alchemist is a co-worker with God; prayer must accompany manipulation.

We see this implied in the first major Western alchemical treatise, the *Summa Perfectionis*, attributed to Geber, but probably written by the Franciscan Paul of Taranto in the fourteenth century. The *Summa* begins by telling the aspirant: “Know, dearest son, that whoever does not know the natural principles in himself, is already far removed from our art, since he does not have the true root upon which he should found his goal.” This root may be found only by the person who “has natural ingenuity and a soul subtly searching the natural principles and foundations of nature.” In other words: alchemy depends upon a purified heart—knowing the natural principles in oneself that are one with the root of all things—and the ability to observe the processes of nature directly, precisely, and closely with what the *Summa* calls “the highest scrutiny,” a scrutiny that depends upon a profound purification of the soul and senses. As Gertrude in her monastic enclosure realized, it is the transformed heart that must acquire eyes and ears. Neither nature nor God are to be naturalistically analyzed but are rather revealed, received by one with the eyes to see and the ears to hear what will be given.

Implicit here is the fact that alchemy, which entered the West from Arabic sources (as in Morienus and Geber) underwent a profound change in the transmission: it was spiritualized. This is not to say that alchemy had not had a spiritual and mystical component in Hellenic times but only to suggest that in Islam it had assumed primarily a practical, quantitative form. It worked almost exclusively with the four elements. The “fifth essence,” or spiritual, Sophianic substance potentially uniting nature, God, and the human soul, played little part in the original Arabic Jabirian corpus. Yet in the West this quintessence came to found a new sacred—we may even say “eucharistic”—science for the transformation of the world. Precisely how this came about is as yet unknown. A primary influence, as suggested by Dan Merkur, must have been the version of the *Emerald Tablet* that became the Bible of Western hermetists. Recall that, in the Latin translation, it begins: “That which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the

miracles of the one thing." However, in the Arabic version, the text reads: "That which is above is from that which is below, and that which is below is from that which is above"—a straightforward reference to circulation. In the Latin text, which became known above all in Hortulanus's *Commentary*, not only is there the suggestion of parallel universes—supernal and inferior—but also of their ultimate identity.

All this would have been known by the one called Christian Rosenkreutz, who was born, according to legend, in Germany, in 1378. The tale told by the *Fama* and *Confessio* is well-known and summarizes many of the elements we have discussed already. Raised in a cloister, Christian Rosenkreutz determined while still a youth of fifteen or sixteen to go to the Holy Land—Palestine in a literal sense, but symbolically the supreme center or heart of the world, the Sacred Heart or Holy Grail. Geographically, he never reached his goal of Jerusalem, visiting instead Damascus, or Damcar, Egypt, and Fez. He learned Arabic, and studied "mathematica, physic, and magic" with the Hermetists and spiritual masters of Islam. Accepting this account, we may say that in Arabia he was fully initiated into the sacred sciences of the group of medieval Arab philosophers known as the Ikhwan al-Safa, or Brethren of Purity. There he studied their fifty-two *Epistles*, fourteen of which deal with the mathematical sciences, seventeen with the natural sciences, ten with psychology, and eleven with theology. In Fez, through which the great Ibn Arabi had just passed, he would have met with the highest levels of Sufi intellectual realization. As a fifteenth-century historian wrote:

In Fez one finds masters of all branches of intellectuality, such as grammar, law, mathematics, chronometry, geometry, metaphysics, logic, rhetoric, music and these masters know all the relevant texts by heart. Whoever does not know by heart the basic text relating to the science about which he speaks is not taken seriously.

Although he believed that what he was taught was somewhat "defiled" by his teachers' religion, Christian Rosenkreutz "knew how to make good use of the same." He found his Christian faith strengthened and "altogether agreeable with the Harmony of the whole World" and its evolution through "periods of times." After two years in Fez, therefore, he decided to return to Europe which was already "big with great commotions," as we



have seen, and laboring to give birth to a new world. But, of course, no one in power would listen to his new, nonhierarchical, unified vision and he was forced to return to Germany, where in solitude and secrecy he founded the *Fraternity of the Rosie Cross* with its celebrated six-point rule:

First, to profess no other thing, than to cure the sick, and that *gratis*. We have already remarked that this rule, as stated, is a rule of love. "Compassion," wrote Paracelsus, "is the true physician's teacher." "Compassion," of course, means "feeling with," and what is love (or healing) but to feel another's suffering as one's own and recognize that the disease, the pain, is one in all. In addition, however, we should also note that the primary orientation is toward the world, the *Liber Mundi*—that is, toward other beings, for we can love only other, living beings. The Rosicrucian, then, works for the sake of the world, not the individual soul. Granted that from a nondualist perspective there is no difference between the healing of one's soul and the healing of the world, the Rosicrucian rule nevertheless affirms the primacy of service and action. If one is a true Rosicrucian, one walks "the true thorn-strewn way of the cross—the renunciation of all selfhood—for the sake of the redemption of the world, that is, the building of the New Jerusalem." That is why the rule specifies that the nature of the service is aimed at "healing," which, too, must be understood in the largest sense to include nature. From this point of view, nature, like humanity, fell with Adam and is sick and needs healing. Like humanity, nature is not the unity it ought to be: it groans and travails in pain; it is diseased. Paracelsus called this state of separation and disunity the "*cagastum*." Yet precisely to heal this disease, to renew the unity of nature in and through humanity, Christ came. Indeed, as Prince Lapoukhin writes, Christ not only "mystically sprinkled every soul with the virtue of his blood, which is the tincture proper to the renewal of the soul in God... but he also regenerated the mass of immaterial elements of which he shall make a new heaven and a new earth." In other words, "the crown of all the mysteries of nature adorns the altar of the sanctuary, lit only by the light of the stainless Lamb [whose] precious blood, sacrificed for the salvation of the world, is the sole tincture that renews all things." To conjoin the Rose and the Cross in nature as a whole, to heal and unite nature and human nature in its center or heart, is thus the Rosicrucian aim.

The second rule is stated as follows: that no one should be obliged to wear any kind of distinctive dress but should adapt himself to the customs of the

country. At its simplest, this is the injunction to live anonymously, unpretentiously, plying some ordinary trade, drawing no attention to oneself. At another level, since chief among the customs of a country is its language, this rule invokes the "gift of tongues," so often mentioned as a Rosicrucian characteristic. This gift, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, is said to mean that the possessor of it addresses everyone in their own language, that is, in the way and at the level appropriate to their understanding, implying, as Guénon points out, that the person who has attained the Rose Cross, having reached the center or heart of the world, is attached to no form, no name, not even his or her own—some sources adding that the second rule includes the injunction to change one's name with each country one visits. Here, then, is the meaning of the designation "cosmopolitan" found throughout the literature—true Rosicrucians are at home everywhere and nowhere. It should be remarked, too, that this rule of nonattachment to phenomenal forms extends in principle also to beliefs. As Ibn Arabi notes: "The true sage is bound to no particular belief." In other words, the partisan Protestant context in which the announcement of the Rose Cross is embedded is anti-thetical—indeed, diametrically opposed—to its true spirit.

The third rule enjoins thus: that every year on Christmas Day they meet together at the house *Sancti Spiritus* or write the cause of their absence. Sancti Spiritus or Holy Spirit is the name Rosenkreutz gave to his "building," naming it after what it housed. This is to say that the "mother house"—the Church or Temple—of the Rose Cross is invisible. It is the Temple of the Spirit, the Inner Church, which is the redeemed Sophia, the mystical body of Christ. It is the Church of the Fire of Love. Prince Lapoukhin, writing of *The Characteristics of the Interior Church*, after having discounted faith, prayer, fasting, seeing visions, the gift of prophecy, miracles, and even humility as distinctive—for these can be deceptive—concludes that the only true sign is love. "Love is the manifestation of Christ's spirit, which can only exist in love, and can only work by love." Only what proceeds from the spirit, the fire, of love is good and true. In other words, we return again to the heart, this time as the Temple of the Rose Cross.

The last three rules seem simpler: first, each Brother must chose a successor. This means, in keeping with what we have already understood, there is to be no Rosicrucian school or similar institution. The Rosicrucian, working alone, anonymously, for the sake of humanity and the world

seeks one intimate friend to continue the work. Second, the word *C. R.* should be their Seal, Mark, and Character. As their seal, the Rose Cross is stamped on their heart: it has become their heart, their work. As their mark, it radiates from them like the light of six thousand candles. As their character, it affirms that they will be known by their fruits of love. Finally, the last rule: they shall remain secret one hundred years.

Christian Rosenkreutz, let us recall, was born in 1378 and lived one hundred and six years, that is, he died in 1484—though his tomb was not discovered and opened for 120 years, that is in 1604. Much went on then between the putative founding of the Fraternity and the publication of the primary documents around 1614 and 1615. Indeed, these documents, clearly written by Johann Valentin Andreae and his friends sometime between 1604 and 1614 acknowledge the revolutionary impact of the preceding century and a half.

First, there was the visit of the initiate Georgios Gemistos, known as Plethon, to Italy for the last ecumenical council of Florence/Ferrara in 1438–1439. It was Plethon who so fired Cosimo de Medici with the idea of a lineage of ancient theologians reaching back into primordial times that Cosimo “conceived in his noble mind a kind of Academy” to study this perennial wisdom and, about 1450, asked the son of his favorite doctor to organize this and start translating the texts of these ancient masters that Plethon had provided. Thus the Platonic Academy of Florence came into being, and Marsilio Ficino began his epoch-making translations, including those of Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, Proclus, the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Chaldean Oracles*. But Plethon’s influence outran even this. Besides Cosimo, Plethon met and equally inspired Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas of Cusa whose association in the “other” Academy, that of Palestrina, was also to have far-reaching effects in that magic work *The Dream of Poliphilo*.

It was also Plethon who, at the time that Christian Rosenkreutz was laying the foundations of the Fraternity of the Rose Cross, publicly introduced the project of the Christianization of ancient wisdom. To what extent Plethon himself believed in this project, or whether he would rather have preferred to see a return of the most ancient solar cosmic religion, must remain a moot point. Certainly, some like Jean Robin, have attributed to his offspring a sinister stream of counter-initiation, or at least counter-Christian initiation. Nevertheless, Plethon’s influence was enormous. He did much

more than merely inspire Ficino's translations and Cusanus's philosophy. Above all, it was he who brought the symbol of "fire" to the center of the tradition we have been following and pushed the idea of ecumenicism to the bounds of heresy upholding the universality of all forms—which is the same as being attached to none. His position was, to adapt a current slogan, "to think religion globally and embody it locally"—as good an explanation as one can find of our Fraternity's second rule. As for fire, drawing on the *Chaldean Oracles* and what he knew of Zoroastrianism and the Persian *Ishtaki*, or theosophers of Light (of whom, Corbin proposes, he was a student), Plethon considered fire to be the all-luminous substance, the pure luminescence or Spirit, which is the nature and source of all created things. All things then, were filled with tongues of Sophianic flame, descended from a single fire. Fire was, in other words, the quintessence and as such was the medium at once of magic and of alchemy.

The consequences of this initiation (or counter-initiation) were far-reaching. Most important, perhaps, for us was the influence on Paracelsus of the ancient Gnostic and Platonic texts translated by Ficino (to which we must add Pico della Mirandola's initiating of Christian Kabbala, then carried on by Trithemius and Johannes Reuchlin). These provided the great precursor with a vocabulary of ideas he could oppose, transform, and play with in an individual, prophetic manner—but only with a vocabulary. Although the consequences of the Florentine and Roman Academies were great and in a sense formed modern esotericism as we know it, from the point of view we are pursuing here in our search for the meaning of the Rose Cross, their efforts were contingent, not essential. In other words, even though Paracelsus used many of the Platonic, Gnostic, Kabbalistic, and Hermetic ideas flowing forth from the Academies, he was, like Luther, and the Fraternity of the Rose Cross itself, more a radical and innovative continuer of the medieval traditions we have been following than a "Renaissance Magus."

I realize that to say this is controversial. Nevertheless, the three primary documents of the Rose Cross are unarguably Christian in essence and are founded in Luther's return to the fundamental fact of the Incarnation, the Cross. Consequently, the central device of the Rose Cross is *Ex deo nascimur, in Jesu morimur, per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus*. "From God we are born, in Jesus we die, through the Holy Spirit we are reborn." *Jesus mihi omnia*, "Jesus is all to me," they repeat. Behind this affirmation of

the universal necessity of death and resurrection lies Luther's radical understanding that everything must be viewed in the light of, and pass through, the life-giving revelation or crucible of the Cross. This is to say that the experience of the Cross must everywhere be interiorized. And it was this process of interiorization that led Luther to his existential and epistemological breakthrough. Interiorizing the Cross, Luther realized that the meaning of God—God's justice, goodness, wrath, and so on—was to be understood nowhere else than in himself, in his own experience, his own heart. The meaning of God is what God works in us.

For this reason, Luther was perhaps the first to take as his emblem the Rose and the Cross: a large five-petalled white rose, enclosed within the blue circle of the world which is bounded by gold, at whose center lies a heart, wherein sits a black cross.

The first thing expressed in my seal is a cross, black, within the heart, to put me in mind that faith in Christ crucified saves us. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Now, although the cross is black, mortified, and intended to cause pain, yet it does not change the color of the heart, does not destroy nature, i.e., does not kill, but keeps alive.

The rose is white, writes Luther, because white is the color of all angels and blessed spirits. The fact that it is so, and not red, the color of incarnation or embodiment, and single, not sevenfold, shows that Luther was more a mystic than a hermetic, sacred scientist. Nevertheless, Luther appreciated the hermetic science not only for its many uses "but also for the sake of the allegory and secret signification . . . touching the resurrection of the dead at the Last Day." He understood that alchemy, too, in the final analysis, depends upon the Cross—Christ crucified—and that, in the Lutheran Khunrath's words, "the whole cosmos was a work of Supernal Alchemy, performed in the crucible of God," where the fundamental fact of existence, the "crucified God" becomes the key to the nature of God, humanity, and the cosmos.

For this tradition, all the meaning of history, evolution, nature, resurrection—is to be sought in the Cross. Since Christ's Incarnation, indeed, this Cross—making possible the reality of resurrection—is everywhere, in the very substance of things. It is the root fact of existence, closer to human

beings than their jugular veins. One can easily understand why this reality makes a mockery of any institutions or speculative philosophies that seek to "mediate" between this central fact of existence and human existence as such. God and nature, nature and grace, grace and gnosis or revelation are two sides of a single coin. Therefore Luther reaffirmed the possibility of each soul's having direct, unmediated access to God and God's nature and processes. What had been separated before was now united in and through the Cross. To pass through the Cross, to enact it, was to participate in the new creation—the transubstantiation—that it alone made possible.

Paracelsus, of course, was no friend of Luther. He felt that Luther had dogmatized his revelation so that it had become a justification of privilege and election. Paracelsus took his stand on experience, against all authority. On this basis, he espoused the interdependence of radical religious and intellectual freedom, freedom of the will, pacifism, and the unity of humanity. Fighting for these, he was on the side of the poor and the oppressed: everything he did was motivated out of love for the fallenness of creatures, and the goal of all his work was to hasten the great redemption or healing he felt was possible. Thus, though disapproving of Luther, he shared the Reformer's insight into the Cross as the Rosetta Stone of the Great Work. But he did so while bringing to consummation and transforming the medieval traditions of vernacular spirituality we have followed. That is, he took the practice of sticking close to experience out of the cloister, out of the hermetic order, and into the world. He sought out teachers, experience, and wisdom wherever he could find them—in nature, in the mines, among peasants, herb gatherers, gypsies, in the schools of anatomy, at the feet of Kabbalists, magicians, scholars, and monks, in his father's alchemical laboratory. He would take nothing on faith or on the basis of someone else's theory; he had to prove what was real by experiencing its truth in himself. And he traveled, crossing and recrossing Europe and, according to legend, passing even into Turkey, Russia, and perhaps even China.

In this way, in nature as well as in himself, Paracelsus discovered the truth of the Cross and the Rose. As he studied all the ancient authorities—though he found much that was of value in them—he found them universally and necessarily deficient, because he realized that the world had changed since they had had their experiences. The world after the Incarnation was not the same as the world before. The world was a growing,

changing organism. It was ever in the process of becoming more perfect. More than that, for the sake of this perfection, it had, as it were, been turned inside out from its center, but in such a way that there was no longer really any outside. Through the Incarnation, the Godhead, the Holy Trinity, had entered the world—or at least the *Mysterium Magnum*, “the one mother of all things,” what Hildegard called *Sapientia* or Sophia—and was now in the world, actively participating in its drama, seeking its own redemption in the microcosm/macrocosm. Consider, for instance, the magnificent opening of Hortulanus’s prayer that begins his famous *Commentary on the Emerald Tablet*. Hortulanus writes: “Laude, honor, power, and glory, be given to thee, O Almighty Lord God, with thy beloved son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. *O holy Trinity, that art the only one God, perfect man*, I give thee thanks.”

Here is why so much of Paracelsus’s effort went into combating simple-minded reliance on the ancient doctrine of the elements. For these four elements, like the diseases preying on humanity and nature itself, have been utterly transformed by the immanence in humanity and nature, microcosm and macrocosm alike, of the three principles he names Sulfur, Mercury, and Sal, these principles always representing in some degree the Trinity—*Ex deo nascimur, in Christo morimur, per spiritum sanctum reviviscimus*—but a Trinity that is now in the world, the principle of all.

Paracelsus’s great accomplishment—for which he was forever invoked as the great precursor—was to unite the mystical and the alchemical, the religious and the cosmological, in a life completely given over to service of humanity and the world. What the medieval mystics saw as the promise of the mystical exchange or union of the three hearts—their own, that of Mary-Jesus, and that of Christ—Paracelsus realized more practically as the union of the human with nature and the divine. The image of the alchemist or Rosicrucian as a kind of universal lay priest celebrating a kind of healing Mass in which not just bread and wine were transformed but nature and human nature in its entirety derives from Paracelsus. It was he who fully re-spiritualized alchemy into a cosmic liturgy, a universal path of healing and worship in the largest sense. Paracelsus, indeed, was the type of the new priest who realizes in himself—by means of the star in himself, the Imagination—the identity of macrocosm and microcosm and on the basis of such knowledge by identity, or experience, understands the world

from within as a complex field of signatures, seminal images, and analogies and acts in it, healing and transforming it.

Paracelsus died in 1541, but not before prophesying the return of Elijah, *Elias Artista*, who would inaugurate an age of *renovatio*, "at which time there shall be nothing so occult that it shall not be revealed." As Christ had said: "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 12:26). So far, God had allowed only the lesser to appear. The greater part still remained hidden, but, as Paracelsus prophesied, all would emerge with Elias who would usher in a new "golden age." "Humanity will arrive at true intellect, and live in human fashion, not in the way of beasts, the manner of pigs, nor in a den"—this, of course, after the defeat of the Antichrist. In the course of the next half century, this and other prophecies and portents echoed, amplified, and resounded against the turbulence of social, religious, and political unrest. And not only prophecies—for it seemed on the basis of the new discoveries, imperial voyages of exploration, and the magical universes being opened up, that the new age had to be near. Dee had published the *Monas Hieroglyphas* (whose symbol adorns *The Chemical Wedding*) in 1564. "Cosmopolitans" like Alexander Seton and Michael Sendivogius began to circulate through Europe, producing wonders and disappearing. Lutherans like Libavius and Khunrath strove to usher in the new epoch. Some, like Simon Studion, announced it.

Thus, with hindsight, the Rosicrucian call to arms comes as no surprise. In a sense, it is self-explanatory. The texts, both in their emphases and their polemics, make the Lutheran origin of the documents very clear. Frances Yates has demonstrated the political ends to which the General Reformation was intended. What then is the mystery? It has to do with the distinction, contained in the documents themselves, between "Rosicrucian" and "Rose Cross." Rosicrucians are those who wish to usher in a new epoch of sacred science, art, and religion, and work for cultural transformation in that sense. Those who bear the "Rose Cross"—whose "seal, mark, and character" it is—are those who have united inner and outer, spirit and matter, divine and created worlds, and bear that union and intimate congress of heaven and earth in their hearts. They thus move about in the world as servants of the Word invisibly serving, healing, and creating for God's greater glory and the salvation of all creatures. They are something else. Only if you know them will you recognize them. Who is to say, in this



sense, whether Saint Vincent de Paul or Saint Francis de Sales or Berulle of the Oratory or Saint John Eudes—all contemporaries of the Rosicrucian Enlightenment—are not true Rosicrucians, as Jean Robin has suggested. Who is to say? The legend is that following the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 (which marked the end of the Thirty Years' War) the true Rose Cross left Europe for the East. Yet the practice of the Rose in the Cross and the affiliation to the Invisible Temple or New Jerusalem continued. It continues still: we still await the outpouring of spiritual intelligence that Joachim of Fiore foresaw.

Rose, pure contradiction, joy  
to be no one's sleep under so many lids.

With these words the Prague-born Rainer Maria Rilke, who bore his cross and knew his roses, marked his little grave in the high churchyard of the old church of Raron. Perhaps no more can be said.

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*The Rosicrucian  
Prelude*

*John Dee's Mission in Central Europe*

NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE



Title page, *Monas hieroglyphica*, 1564.



W

HEN I AROSE AT DAWN yesterday morning at our Berkshire farmhouse to make ready for an early departure, the verse from *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1616) of Johann Valentin Andreae kept running through my mind:

Today – Today – Today  
Is the wedding of the King  
If you are born for this,  
Chosen by God for joy,  
You may ascend the mount  
Whereon three temples stand  
And see the thing yourself.

Take heed,  
Observe yourself!  
If you're not clean enough  
The wedding can work ill.  
Perjure here at your peril;  
He who is light, beware!

The verse forms a letter of invitation to a wedding that is delivered by an angel to the narrator; its themes of spiritual election, pilgrimage, and the need for purity and self-preparation recur in our own experience as we set off to this gathering of fellow seekers and pilgrims. Several hours later, as I stood on the balcony of the arrivals hall at Prague airport, I scanned the illuminated display boards indicating the times of incoming flights from all over Europe and North America. Again I thought of the numerous wedding guests making their way from places as diverse and distant as California,

Chicago, New York, London, Brussels, Frankfurt, and Rome by the most modern forms of international transport to our unique Rosicrucian gathering here in southern Bohemia. Our participation at this event nearly four hundred years after the publication of the original manifestos provides remarkable evidence of their enduring mystique.

But if this verse captures the idea of an invitation to a remarkable and transforming experience, it also offers the first important clue to the role of John Dee (1527–1608) in the elaboration of the “universal and general reformation of the whole wide world” that underlay the Rosicrucian manifestos published between 1614 and 1616. Next to this verse in the text of *The Chemical Wedding* appears the characteristic “monas” symbol that John Dee had constructed to distill a whole wealth of astrological, alchemical, and cabalistic ideas in a single composite sign. This symbol also appeared on the title page of Andreae’s book.

Further textual links between the hermetic-cabalistic philosophy of John Dee and the Rosicrucian manifestos have been documented by Dame Frances Yates in her pioneering work *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972). Most important, the second Rosicrucian manifesto, the *Confessio* of 1615, was published together with a treatise in Latin entitled “A Brief Consideration of More Secret Philosophy” by one Philip à Gabella. This “Brief Consideration” is closely based on John Dee’s cryptic work, the *Monas hieroglyphica* (1564), and quotes copiously from the first thirteen theorems of the earlier work. These theorems relate to the composition of Dee’s “monas” sign—how it includes the symbols of all the planets and the zodiacal sign of Aries, representing fire and thus alchemical processes, as well as the numerological and geometrical ramifications of the cross in the sign. Yates also notes that the “Brief Consideration” was concluded by a Latin prayer of intense piety, strongly suggestive of Dee’s own prayers for cosmological and scientific enlightenment, both through his natural philosophy and the practice of angel-magic.<sup>1</sup>

In order to underpin her bold suggestion that the ideas of the Elizabethan magus had influenced the Rosicrucian manifestos, Yates also adduces a number of other pieces of evidence linking Elizabethan England with Württemberg (the native state of Johann Valentin Andreae)

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1. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, pp. 39, 45–47.

and the Palatinate (the realm of the elector palatine Frederick V, the "Winter King" and champion of Protestant hopes in Bohemia). She suggests that the Rosicrucian publications represented a religious and political prophecy for European unity along the lines of a hermetic and cabalistic revelation beyond the rivalries of the Protestant and Catholic powers.

The political background centered on the link between King James I of England and the Protestant princes of Germany. In 1612, James I had joined the Union of Protestant Princes, the head of which was the young elector palatine Frederick, to whom James engaged his daughter Elizabeth in the same year. The wedding took place in 1613, with its implication of British support for the cause of German Protestantism. At this time Prince Christian of Anhalt, a powerful German Protestant sovereign, began to canvas for Frederick's leadership of the Protestant German states against the Hapsburg empire. Anhalt has been identified as the driving force behind Frederick's disastrous Bohemian adventure. He had many contacts in Bohemia and was closely in touch with the national rebels, who decided to offer the crown to Frederick in defiance of the Hapsburg emperor.

Yates regards Anhalt as the key personality in the diplomacy and intrigues between the Protestant German states and Bohemia, and this opinion is indeed confirmed by the propaganda against Anhalt after the Hapsburg defeat of Frederick in Bohemia. But, more important for Yates, it is the philosophical interests of Christian of Anhalt that indicate a link to John Dee. Although he was an enthusiastic Calvinist, Anhalt was greatly inspired by the mystical and Paracelsist currents of the late sixteenth century. He was the patron of Oswald Croll, a famous alchemist who also served as court physician to Emperor Rudolf II, and a close friend of Peter Vok Rozmberk, a powerful Bohemian noble with vast estates around Trebon in southern Bohemia, also a patron of alchemy and magic.

Trebon was in fact the castle where John Dee and Edward Kelley found a safe refuge in Bohemia from late 1586 until 1589, following their earlier expulsion from Bohemia by Emperor Rudolf, who was acting under Catholic pressure. Yates speculates that Dee's ideas would have found a powerful focus in Bohemia in the late 1580s. His ideas involving mathematics, alchemy, and angel-magic would, she suggests, have continued to resonate into the early years of the seventeenth century. Such a high regard for the



marvels of Elizabethan magic and science would then have strengthened German Protestant hopes of an English alliance and support for a Protestant Bohemia. Given Christian of Anhalt's acquaintance with Peter Vok Rozmberk and his evident interest in alchemy, Yates considered that Dee's intellectual legacy in Bohemia must have loomed large in the hopes and calculations of Anhalt as he propelled the elector palatine toward his ill-fated bid for the throne of Bohemia.<sup>2</sup>

In her account of the hermetic tradition, Yates distinguishes an early Renaissance phase led by Ficino in Florence and a later efflorescence marked by the appearance of the Rosicrucian manifestos in Germany.<sup>3</sup> In her opinion it was Dee's bold synthesis of astrology, alchemy, magic, and cabala—set down as early as 1564 in his *Monas hieroglyphica*—that provided the theoretical basis of Rosicrucianism before its overt publication in 1614. John Dee's mission to Central Europe in the years between 1583 and 1589 thus became the means whereby this original Elizabethan hermetic-cabalistic synthesis was transmitted to a Continental milieu, which then combined with the political aspirations of the German Protestants to generate the Rosicrucian literature. What is the truth of these assertions? What indeed was the inspiration behind the late outburst of hermetic ideas in the Rosicrucian manifestos? Who were the precursors of the Rosicrucian enlightenment?

The adviser of Queen Elizabeth I, tutor and friend of the earl of Leicester and the Sidney circle, John Dee enjoyed wide renown as a philosopher, mathematician, geographer, and navigator. A scholar-magician in the Renaissance tradition, he was also immersed in the occult arts and the influence of supernatural powers. We will follow John Dee and his assistant Edward Kelley on their Continental mission which was inspired by hopes of a major spiritual upheaval and religious reconciliation. His practice of angel-magic and alchemy, travels and contacts in Cracow, Prague, Bohemia, and Germany throw important light on the later Rosicrucian furor.

John Dee was born on July 13, 1527 in London, the son of a minor courtier to King Henry VIII. He was educated in London and Chelmsford

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

3. Marcilio Ficino (1433–1499), Italian philosopher, known mainly as a Platonist. He became head of Platonic Academy of Florence and was commissioned by the elder Cosimo de' Medici to translate into Latin the works of Plato and several Neoplatonists.

and then went up to John's College, Cambridge, at the age of sixteen in 1542. By his own account, Dee was a most diligent student, whose appetite for knowledge was barely satisfied by eighteen hours' study each day. Besides the humanistic curriculum, including Latin and Greek, Dee was strongly drawn to mathematics and mechanics, which were only taught informally in private groups. His academic attainments were early rewarded by a fellowship in Greek at Trinity College, which had been founded in December 1546 by Henry VIII. But Dee's scientific interests could not be satisfied inside the English universities at this time, and he made the first of many trips abroad in search of advanced mathematical instruction. In May 1547 he visited the Low Countries to study navigation with Gemma Frisius, the renowned geographer, and also became acquainted with Gerhardus Mercator, the famous cartographer.<sup>4</sup> After a further short spell at Cambridge, Dee studied at Louvain from 1548 to 1550, during which years he also spoke publicly on Euclid in Paris to packed lecture halls.

It is likely that Dee's Parisian lectures expounded a theory of numbers operating in the three worlds—elemental, celestial, and supercelestial—as defined by the German Renaissance scholar-magician, Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535). These lectures greatly furthered Dee's reputation on the Continent and prompted many important scholars to seek his acquaintance. Following Dee's return to England in 1551, his Cambridge contacts introduced him to King Edward VI. Dee presented the king with two treatises and received a pension in return, which he subsequently exchanged for two parochial livings. These guaranteed him a steady income for the next thirty years. In the ensuing decade Dee made a career as a court intellectual, entering the service of the earl of Pembroke and tutoring the sciences to the Dudley family. In this way he established his reputation as a leading authority on navigation, geography, mathematics, and astrology. He was a close friend of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, and was well known to leading members of the royal court, including William Cecil, Sir Francis Walsingham, Sir Philip Sidney and his circle, and, after her accession to the throne, Queen Elizabeth herself.

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4. Gerhardus Mercator (1512–1594), Flemish cartographer who produced Palestine, world, and other maps; he was charged with heresy and imprisoned for seven months. He is best known for his world map, which employed the "Mercator projection."

Toward the end of the 1560s, Dee established himself at Mortlake on the Surrey shore of the River Thames in a house that belonged to his mother. It was conveniently sited between London and Hampton Court, so that Dee was able to keep in touch with members of the court on their way to and fro. It was there that Dee established his famous collection of books and manuscripts, which has been rightly called "Elizabethan England's greatest library." Over the years Dee added more rooms and buildings to house his many collections of ancient Welsh records and genealogies, his scientific instruments, and an alchemical laboratory. Among the 2,500 or so printed books and 170 manuscripts in the library there were many works concerned with the mystical thought of Ramon Lull and the medieval science of Duns Scotus, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Roger Bacon. John Dee was obviously well acquainted with Florentine Neoplatonism, for he possessed the complete works of Marsilio Ficino as well as his translations and commentaries on Plato and Plotinus. These were joined by works by Pico della Mirandola, who had combined magic and Neoplatonism with cabala, thereby initiating the Renaissance interest in this Jewish mystical tradition. Dee owned many books by Paracelsus, Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Trithemius as well as copies of the hermetic *Asclepius* and *Pimander* and the Turnebus edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum* of 1554. Works by Zoroaster, Orpheus, and Iamblichus were also to be found among Dee's manuscripts.

Both Yates and Peter French have concluded on the basis of this library catalog that Dee was deeply versed in the hermetic and cabalist currents of Renaissance philosophy, which had become widely known in Italy, France, and Germany from the latter part of the fifteenth century onward. And more than this: they have identified Dee as the foremost proponent of this philosophy in England at a time when these subjects were little known and even neglected in favor of the humanistic curriculum.<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Clulee has questioned the scope of Dee's knowledge of the books in his library at any one time, indicating that there was often a significant lag between the date of a book's acquisition and its study.

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5. Frances A. Yates, *Theatre of the World*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969, pp. 1-19; Peter French, *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, pp. 40-62.

In fact a close reading of Dee's major work, *Propaedeumata Aphoristica* (1558), shows how his early natural philosophy developed from Arabic and medieval Oxford science. Here Dee approached the subject of astrology as a kind of physics, whereby the heavens cause and order all change in the elemental or terrestrial world. Dee believed that the heavens achieved this by means of rays that are emitted by all substances and events, thus transferring the virtues of any species onto other things: "whatever exists in actuality spherically projects into each part of the world rays, which fill up the universe to its limit" (*PA*, IIII). Light was a visible model for this process of emanation, and thus the study of geometrical optics based on lines, angles, and figures became a basis for the study of all astrological influence. Building on the work of al-Kindi (d. c. 873), Robert Grossteste (1168/70–1253), and Roger Bacon (1214/20–c. 1292), Dee thus developed a concrete mechanism of astrological influence and a rationale for the mathematical study of nature. At this stage Dee was still working within the context of an Aristotelian model of science.

Written shortly after Dee had witnessed the coronation of Emperor Maximilian at Pressburg and dedicated to the Habsburg monarch, the *Monas* represents a very different kind of thinking from the naturalistic *Propaedeumata*. Its central reference throughout the text, a short treatise of twenty-three theorems and accompanying figures, is the *Monas*, a complex hieroglyph that Dee promises to explain "mathematically, magically, cabalistically, and anagogically."

Frances Yates has suggested that within the context of Renaissance Hermeticism, Dee's *Monas* formulated a cabalist mathematical alchemy in which the hieroglyph was a magical amulet whose "unified arrangement of significant signs" "infused with astral power" would have a "unifying affect on the psyche" and facilitate a gnostic ascent through the scale of being. Others have argued that the hieroglyph, given the dedication to the Emperor, reflects Dee's proposal for a cosmopolitan, nonsectarian tolerant religion based on Hermetic occultism.

Clulee has offered a very detailed analysis of the text involving its astrological, alchemical, and numerological aspects to demonstrate convincingly that Dee is here attempting to elaborate an "alphabet of nature." By this is meant the reconstruction of the original divine language of creation that stands behind all human languages. Dee notes that the shape of the letters in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin are generated from points, straight

lines, and the circumferences of circles, and likewise the signs of the planets and the metals. Dee describes a number of complex manipulations of the *Monas*, involving its component parts, assembly, and dismantlement, in order to make deductions about the nature of the celestial and elemental worlds. However, in the final analysis, the *Monas* is less about alchemy or astrology or magic than a gnostic work in which the mystical ascent to God is a culmination of the knowledge of the cosmos.<sup>6</sup>

However, since we are here concerned with the status of Dee's thought at the outset of his mission to central Europe, it is sufficient to state that by 1580 Dee's worldview reflected a profound hermetic synthesis of astrological, alchemical, and cabalistic correspondences among the three worlds—mundane, celestial, and supercelestial. We know from his 1563 letter to William Cecil from Antwerp that Dee was highly enthusiastic about his discovery of Trithemius's texts *Steganographia* and *Polygraphia*. While the latter text was simply concerned with cryptography, the *Steganographia* also dealt with the transmission of messages by occult means, involving spirits, their images, invocations, and conjurations.

The three books deal with the names, sigils, prayers, and invocations of progressively more powerful spirits. Book one describes the spirits of the air, which are difficult and dangerous because of their arrogance and rebelliousness. Book two covers the spirits of each hour of the day and night, while book three actually deals with operations with the angels and spirits of the seven planets. These spirits are invoked by prayers and incantations over an image of the spirit at the astrologically appropriate time. Its underlying thesis is that God, the first intellect, delegated the governance of the lower world to seven secondary intelligences corresponding to the seven planets, each of whom ruled for a fixed period governing the course of human history in which major political and religious changes corresponded to a change in planetary governor. Trithemius's writings give a theological and religious justification of magical operations with spirits, demons, and angels.<sup>7</sup>

Trithemius's work gives us the strongest clue for the development of Dee's interest in angel-magic. The occult nature of the *Monas* text indicates his quest for a universal science based on the Baconian notion of the

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6. Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy* (London, 1988), chapter IV and V.

7. Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy* (London, 1988), pp. 137–38.

unity of all knowledge and leavened with the ancient theology of Renaissance Hermeticism and Neoplatonism. But in his desire to plumb the nature of the physical and celestial worlds, he hankered for an absolute revelation of God's will whereby he might receive "true knowledge and understanding of the laws and ordinances established in the natures and properties of [God's] creatures."<sup>8</sup> It was in pursuit of this direct revelation that Dee sought to communicate with the angels in the supercelestial world. Inspired by the examples of Enoch, Moses, and others in Scripture to whom God sent his angels to impart special wisdom, Dee regarded angelic conversation as the ultimate route to scientific certainty and a complete understanding of all creation.

Dee himself lacked clairvoyant ability and employed seers or mediums to establish contact with spirits in the angelic realm by means of crystals and mirrors, while he acted as a recorder of the visions described. There is some scant evidence that Dee had already practiced angel-magic with one Barnabas Saul in the autumn of 1581, though with no great measure of success. The unannounced arrival of Edward Talbot (alias Edward Kelley) at Dee's house on March 9, 1582 signaled the beginning of an extraordinary collaboration in angel-magic that was to last until early January 1589.<sup>9</sup> Kelley was born in 1555 and possessed a sinister reputation as a forger (his ears had been cropped as punishment) and a necromancer—he had tried to raise a corpse from the grave. However, his manifest interest in alchemy and his eagerness to collaborate with Dee in communicating with the angelic realm quickly banished any scruples the older scholar may have had about this strange partnership. On the day of his arrival Kelley quickly proved himself a most remarkable medium and over the next few months the two held numerous "actions" or spirit conferences, involving the revelation of arcane knowledge and directions for manufacturing magical equipment, including a holy table, seals, and complex codes for the better reception and understanding of angelic communication.

Kelley swiftly made himself indispensable to Dee, whose craving for this higher knowledge knew no bounds. Many scholars have speculated about the personality of Kelley and the nature of his partnership with Dee. There

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8. Quoted in Nicholas H. Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy*, p. 207.

9. *The Private Diary of Dr John Dee*, edited by James Halliwell (London, 1842), pp. 14–15.

is wide agreement that Kelley certainly had visions and could not have sustained such an elaborate and demanding hoax for years on end while in Dee's employ. On the other hand, it has been noted that he was a highly unstable personality, subject to fits of physical violence. He often declared that the angels were impostors or evil spirits and expressed his desire to desist from all further seances. But Dee could not bear to lose his hotline to the supercelestial world, and these angry and reproachful scenes were regularly followed by reconciliation, a pay raise for Kelley, and continued angelic discourse.

The body of material resulting from Dee's actions with the spirits dwarfs, in its bulk, all his other works combined. It offers the most intimate view of Dee's personality and spiritual and intellectual life. The topics of the actions range across religion, politics, the reformation of the Church, cosmology, theology, eschatology, and natural philosophy. There are two classes of material: (i) *Libri mysteriorum I–XVIII* (1581–1588) [minutes of the séances] (ii) several books based on the angelic revelations, *De heptarchia mystica*; *Liber mysteriorum sextus et sanctus*; 48 *Claves angelicae*; *Liber scientiae auxilii et victoriae terrestis*.

Dee believed in the spirits as good angels bearing genuine messages from God. His record of noises, voices, apparitions, and prophetic dreams in his diaries, quite independently of Kelley's involvement, indicate a personal belief in the reality of a spirit world. His only serious doubts about the spirits came when Kelley announced that the spirits commanded them to share everything in common, including their wives, but his scruples were overcome once the spirits assured him that this was a special dispensation from God to them as his elect.

On the other hand, Kelley may have fabricated everything to deceive Dee: but against this are his bouts of emotional anxiety and arguments with the spirits in the course of his visions, his reluctance to continue except for Dee's desperate pleadings; and his admission of the visions to religious authorities in Prague when this might have had serious if not fatal consequences. But the revelations of the angels were often prejudiced in favour of Kelley's interests in particular circumstances and they also reflect what Kelley knew of Dee's interests. In the minutes, Dee has noted the similarity of the angelic revelations to material in Agrippa, Reuchlin, Trithemius, and Peter of Abano. Kelley lived with Dee and had access to his library. It is possible that the revelations were the joint product of Kelley's imagination and stock of knowledge and what he knew of Dee's thinking from their discussions.

Dee did not consider these actions a type of magic but as a variety of religious experience, sanctioned by the scriptural records of others to whom God or his angels imparted special illumination. Dee thought that as "an honest Christian Philosopher" he should "have the help of God his good Angels to write his holy Mysteries." The practice of the actions therefore took place in the simple religious atmosphere of Dee's oratory following a period of silent prayer and ending with a short prayer of praise and thanksgiving. There is no element of invoking angels and compelling their services; rather it is a question of humbly petitioning God to send his angels, who are in no way thought to be doing Dee's or Kelley's bidding. The opening prayer Dee most often used was addressed to God and Jesus as a source and embodiment of wisdom, and asks that he be worthy of their aid in philosophy and understanding and that they send him their spiritual ministers to inform and instruct him in the arcana of the properties and use of all God's creatures. There are no elaborate ritual preparations, quasi-sacramental ceremonies, no incantations that are part of the ceremonial magic of Agrippa's third book, nor are there the music and Orphic hymns, fumigations, candles, talismans, or foods and substances that figured in the magic of Ficino and Campanella for attracting the beneficent influences of the planets or planetary demons.

What all the séances have in common is that they are catalogues of the angelic and spiritual hierarchies that govern the various regions of the earth and levels or domains of creation with descriptions of their characteristics, powers, their sigils, and the "calls" or incantations by which they may be summoned.

*De heptarchia mystica* presents creation as divided into various sevens. There are seven kings, each with a subordinate prince and forty-two ministers, who rule various regions of the world and the affairs of men as well as being associated with each of the seven days of the week. There are also forty-nine good angels and, below them, other orders of angels whose purview seems to be physical nature, since there are groups for the cure of disease, for metals, for transformation, for the elements, for local change, for the mechanical arts, and for human knowledge of all secrets.

Beginning in 1583 the angels introduced an entirely new language purporting to be the angelic language of Adam and Enoch. This was dictated in the form of numerous grid-like tables of forty-nine rows by forty-nine columns in which letters, sometimes interspersed with numbers, occur in apparently random order. These tables comprise the *Liber mysteriorum*



*sextus et sanctus* (also called the *Liber Logaeth* and *Book of Enoch*). By some method of selection the angels chose from these tables letters to form words and sentences, which amount to another set of calls pertaining to the angels. This became the basis for the *48 Claves angelicae*, written in Cracow in 1584, which consists of a catalogue of the forty-eight angels, their characteristics, and subordinate spirits, and their invocations in the "Enochian" language with English translations.

Besides impelling this significant shift in Dee's philosophical and scientific activity toward angel-magic, Kelley and the angels appear to have played a major role in encouraging Dee to set forth on that mission to central Europe which took them successively to Poland, Bohemia, and Germany between late 1583 and early 1589. Clulee has noted the vagaries of patronage and uncertainties of preferment that characterized Dee's life through the 1570s, including the frustration of his hopes for a return from his investments and rights in voyages of maritime exploration in which he played a not inconsiderable part. Dee's sense of insecurity must have reached a certain climax when he lost his two parochial livings in 1582.<sup>10</sup> The next year, while Dee was pressing his suit at the English court to replace this lost income, the Polish prince Laski arrived in England. Albrecht Laski (1536–1605), the palatine of Sieradz, was the owner of vast estates in central Poland and a strong, though unorthodox Catholic, with pronounced interests in alchemy and the occult. He was a partisan of Hapsburg politics in Poland, having attended the courts of Maximilian II at Vienna and Rudolf II at Prague.

The motive for his visit to England is unclear, although he may have hoped for political advantage in his designs on the Polish throne. Following his arrival on May 1, 1583, Laski was royally entertained in London and Oxford and was introduced to Dee by the earl of Leicester at Greenwich a fortnight later. Returning from a visit to Oxford in mid-June, Laski went to visit Dee at Mortlake in the company of Sir Philip Sidney and Lord Russell. A few days later Laski returned to see Dee again and stayed overnight as his guest. This was the beginning of a close collaboration throughout the summer months that led directly to the departure of Dee and his family with Edward Kelley and Albrecht Laski for the latter's domains in Poland in late September of 1583.<sup>11</sup>

10. Nicholas H. Clulee, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

11. *The Private Diary of Dr John Dee*, pp. 20–21.

Laski had quickly learned of Dee and Kelley's angelic communications, for on May 23, Dee was already asking the angels Laski's questions about King Stephen Báthory of Poland and whether Laski would succeed him as king; he also inquired whether he would gain the kingdom of Moldavia. By May 28, Dee and Kelley were actively discussing the favor Laski was showing them, while the angels, for their part, indicated their acceptance of Laski, providing him with a genealogy deriving from the Plantagenets. Following the admission of Laski to the seances on June 19, the angels prophesied his achievement of great victories; the religious reunion of Christians, Jews, and Saracens; and his rule in Poland.<sup>12</sup> This was indeed a perfect partnership. In Laski, Dee had at long last found a powerful magnate who accepted him as an oracle of secret wisdom and important political revelations, while Laski had discovered in Dee a unique channel to providence concerning his own ambition and political destiny. Given his prodigal lifestyle and shortage of cash, he may also have entertained hopes of Dee and Kelley's alchemical production of gold. As the prospects of patronage from Laski brightened, the angels (always through Kelley) encouraged Dee to set his sights on Poland, while expressing negative views on any hopes in England.

Between them, the angels and Kelley changed Dee's outlook on knowledge and the future course of his life. The famous printed edition of Dee's spiritual diaries between 1583 and 1589, edited by Méric Casaubon in 1651, provides an almost daily record of Dee and Kelley's spirit "actions" throughout the period of the central European adventure together with a detailed description of their travels and their meetings with foreign noblemen, the king of Poland, and Emperor Rudolf II. An examination of this essential guide to the motive and course of John Dee's mission to central Europe enables us to determine how, and to what extent, Dee's presence on the Continent during this decade had any bearing on the subsequent blossoming of hermetic concerns in the Rosicrucian manifestos thirty years later.

Sailing from Gravesend in late September 1583, the party made its way by boat and road along the Dutch and German coasts to Stettin and thence into Poland by way of Posen, reaching Laski's ancestral residence at Lask in early February of 1584. The exigencies of travel on the Continent during

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12. *A True & Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years between Dr John Dee and Some Spirits*, edited by Méric Casaubon (London, 1659), pp. 1-4, 17, 21-23.

the winter and the continuous practice of “actions,” with Kelley consulting the angels through the crystal, absorbed their waking hours. Once in Lask, it became clear that Laski was greatly burdened by unredeemed mortgages and debts accumulated as a result of his long absence and expensive travels; he could ill afford to support Dee and Kelley. The angels were regularly consulted on Laski’s financial and political prospects, and the pair decided to move on to Cracow in March, 1584. Meanwhile the spirit “actions” continued, with Kelley relating the angels’ description of lengthy apocalyptic visions involving the advent of the Antichrist; earthquakes, flames, floods, and the destruction of the world; the humbling of all earthly powers; and the final defeat of the Turks in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

Dee himself regarded angel-magic as a means to a natural theology. Communication with the spirit world was essential for an understanding of nature because creation was presented in a vaguely cabalistic fashion as the self-revelation of God through his attributes in the form of angels and spirits. The term “cabalistic” may be contentious as Dee’s knowledge of cabala was quite slight and Kelley’s was hardly better, but what cosmology and cosmogony there is in the conversations inclines in a Christianized way more toward a cabalistic than a Neoplatonic view. The angels, spirits, and divine governors hold the secrets to the various realms of creation and by communicating with them, Dee will gain access to a natural theology. The recovery of the Adamic language is the key to this design because it is the language all God’s creatures understand. The calls derived from the tables thus have the power to call forth and make obedient the spirits so that they will reveal the “mysteries of the creation” and secret knowledge.

Thus magic—indeed a spiritual and demonic magic of an explicit variety—became the key to the knowledge and understanding of the secrets of creation that Dee sought. The situation is rather ironic if one considers that Dee patiently recorded what he thought were divine revelations through the angels and not a kind of magic, while Kelley was practising the only thing he knew, which *was* magic, and yet presented this demonic magic as the means to fulfillment of Dee’s thirst for knowledge.

This magic was in fact far removed from the philosophical magic and occult philosophy of the Renaissance and the natural magic derived from Roger Bacon. Despite the similiarity of the angelology and demonology to

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13. *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 60–61.

that of Agrippa, there is no hint here of the Neoplatonist theory of the spirit as the vehicle of magical influence, or of the role of the imagination, or of the sympathetic use of the divine qualities in lower things to draw down the influence of higher things. Nor does there remain the quasi-physical concept of occult virtues as a mechanism of magical effects (al-Kindi, Bacon, *Propaedeumata*). There is simply the idea of the world populated by hosts of spirits and magic as a straightforward theurgic conjuration.

Relations remained cordial with Laski notwithstanding Dee and Kelley's removal to Cracow, where they continued to receive extensive cabalistic and magical communications from the angels interspersed with cryptic and frequently contradictory advice concerning their next move. At length, on May 21, Dee received an unequivocal warning from a green angel that the king and chancellor of Poland had betrayed their land to the Turks. Dee was expressly forbidden to return to Lask and instructed instead to seek an audience with Emperor Rudolf II while being assured of his favor. A week later the angel returned to this theme, saying he had entered the emperor's heart and predicting that within 112 days Dee should find him receptive to his mission. On June 2, Dee was again reminded he had been commanded to go to the emperor.<sup>14</sup> Although Laski soon returned to favor with the angels as the future king of Poland, the urgent summons to the imperial court stood and on August 1, 1584, Dee and Kelley set off from Cracow to Prague, arriving a week later. The English magicians evidently had good connections for they initially found accommodation at the house of the court physician, Tadeas Hajek (1525–1600), near the Bethlehem Chapel in the Old Town.<sup>15</sup>

Dee's visit to Bohemia, where he remained for nearly five years except for short intervals back in Cracow and when briefly banished in Germany, can be understood only within the context of the deep interest in alchemy, astrology, and other occult arts that prevailed at the emperor's court. Rudolf II was a willful and eccentric monarch, but he patronized the arts on a lavish scale once he had moved his court to Prague in 1580. Besides music, fine art, and architecture, Rudolf fostered a veritable efflorescence of hermetic, occult, and cabalistic speculation at the capital. The interest in alchemy reached a peak in central Europe during the half century

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 139, 160, 162.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

between 1570 and 1620, explained in part by the renewed publication of the work of Paracelsus (1493–1541) by his German followers in the 1560s and 1570s. Paracelsian learning was much evident at Rudolfine Prague, and many alchemists combined their occult interests with high positions at court, including Martin Ruland, Tadeas Hajek, Oswald Croll, and Michael Maier, who all held the position of court physician to Rudolf at some stage. They were positive reformers over a broad range of issues, but their inspiring vision was an occult world harmony based on hermetic and Neoplatonic ideas. For these men, alchemy signified not only the regeneration of metals but also the moral and spiritual rebirth of humankind.<sup>16</sup>

Rudolf's interests in the occult were shared by a number of other powerful Czech nobles, including the Rozmberk family. Vilém Rozmberk and his younger brother, Peter Vok Rozmberk, wielded a power in Bohemia little short of regal, with private armies at their command, the freedom to mint coinage, and vast domains in southern Bohemia as well as residences at the Hradschin in Prague. The family chronicler, Vaclav Brezan, has described Vilém Rozmberk's interest in metals and mining and his maintenance of alchemical laboratories at Trebona and Krumlov and at the castle of Reichenstein in Silesia. Brezan has recorded the names of at least a dozen alchemists and occultists in the Rozmberk's service at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

But Dee was not interested in simply adding his name to the impressive roll of alchemists at the Rudolfine court. Given his privileged communications with the angels in the supercelestial world, and the nature of their prophecies, Dee expected conferences with the highest powers in the land. In the first spirit "action" held at Prague, on August 15, 1584, the angel Madimi instructed Dee to write a letter to Emperor Rudolf requesting an audience concerning matters of the utmost importance while alluding to his earlier contact with Emperor Maximilian II, to whom he had dedicated *Monas hieroglyphica*. After another highly apocalyptic "action" on August 20, Dee received word that the emperor would receive him, and accordingly he made his way up to the mighty Hradschin castle, which dominates the city.

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16. Robert J. W. Evans (*Rudolf II and His World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) provides an excellent survey of the principal practitioners of the occult arts at Rudolfine Prague.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–216.

Dee's first meeting with the emperor took place at three o'clock in the afternoon on September 2. After a brief introduction Dee plunged into a long lecture about his lifelong quest for the best knowledge that the human being might attain in the world. Despite the efforts of forty years, he had reached the sad conclusion that neither people nor books could teach him the truths he so desired. He had therefore prayed to God to send him such wisdom. At this point Dee revealed to the emperor that God had sent angels to instruct him for the past two and a half years. The angels had also brought him a crystal and so enabled him to write several extraordinary books. This must have intrigued the occultist emperor, but Dee quickly made it clear that he had not come to tell the emperor the secrets of nature but to disclose an apocalyptic prophecy:

The Angel of the Lord hath appeared to me, and rebuketh you for your sins. If you will hear me, and believe me, you shall triumph: If you will not hear me, the Lord, the God that made heaven and earth . . . putteth his foot against your breast, and will throw you headlong down from your seat.

Dee went on to say that the angel had assured him that if the emperor forsook all wickedness, his throne would be the greatest in history, and he would achieve final victory over the Turks in Europe. Dee concluded that this statement was his God-given commission and stated his willingness to initiate the emperor into the angels' communications.<sup>18</sup>

The emperor courteously responded that he believed Dee, but he added that Dee might dispense with his "earnest protestations." However, the emperor was clearly intrigued and arranged for his privy councillor, Dr. Curtz, to liaise with Dee regarding the supercelestial revelation. A lengthy six-hour conference between Dee and Curtz ensued on September 15, in which Dee demonstrated his magical equipment and the manuscript minutes of the spirit "actions." Dee reiterated his advice that the emperor follow his counsel as an expert in divine and angelic matters and seemed initially confident in Curtz's good offices. Following some delay, doubts supervened, and Dee wrote again to the emperor and complained

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18. *A True & Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years between Dr John Dee and Some Spirits*, p. 231.

to Curtz of the unflattering rumors regarding his person as a bankrupt alchemist who was after the emperor's money. Curtz asserted that he had reported plainly and sincerely to the emperor, who thought the angelic revelation either incredible or impossible but wanted more time to consider the matter.<sup>19</sup>

Dee and Kelley spent part of the autumn in Cracow, returning to Prague on December 30. They were still evidently welcome, and the "actions" continued on a regular, sometimes daily basis. The angels spent much of their time recommending and rejecting potential patrons, so that Laski was again rejected by the spirits on February 5, 1585, yet on February 23, Dee and Kelley were exhorted to flee from Prague and go to Laski. Despite this uncertainty in the spirit world, Dee's reputation was restored at Prague. On March 14, his newborn son, Michael, was baptized in Vitus's Cathedral in the Hradschin by the court chaplain. Dee's good standing may be inferred from the presence of the Spanish ambassador and Lady Dietrichstein, wife of the emperor's chief steward, and Baron Romff, who acted as godparents.<sup>20</sup>

Dee's material circumstances, however, were far from secure, and once again on March 21, the angels ordered Dee to quit Prague, visit Laski, and offer his revelations to King Steven Báthory of Poland. By March 27, Kelley had become physically violent toward Dee, and injury was averted only by the interference of their wives; the angel Michael sharply reproved Dee for not hastening from Prague to Poland.<sup>21</sup> It was by now obvious that the angels and/or Kelley doubted their chances of success with the emperor and once again wanted Dee to try his luck with Polish patrons. By means of this pressure, Dee was suitably convinced, and the party started out for Cracow on April 5, arriving a week later. The angels had high hopes of Steven Báthory, and Dee had three audiences with the king of Poland on April 17, May 23, and again on May 27, when Stephen attended an "action." Laski urged King Stephen to take Dee and Kelley into his service and give them a "yearly maintenance," but Báthory remained unconvinced of the angelical revelation.<sup>22</sup> Once more the prophets returned to Prague in search of a patron.

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19. *Ibid.*, pp. 246–247.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 382.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 390, 394–395.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 397f, 403–404, 404–406.

Dee's fortunes in Prague were ultimately as disappointing as they had been in England. Despite the constant counsel and warnings of the angels, Dee failed to secure Rudolf's patronage. Although the Emperor was strongly inclined toward the occult and mystical religion, he hesitated to accept Dee's uncompromising angelic revelation and eventually conceded to the demands of the papal nuncio that Dee and Kelley be expelled from his territories. Because of their revelations and prophecies, Dee and Kelley had been suspect to the Catholic Church authorities as early as 1584. Following their return to Prague in the summer of 1585, in the company of Francesco Pucci, a renegade monk regarded as a heretic, these suspicions mounted. Nuncio Germanus Malaspina held a meeting with the two Englishmen in March, 1586, which only increased his hostility. The pope was informed, and Malaspina's successor, Filippo Sega, obtained Rudolf's expulsion order in May, 1586. The pair narrowly avoided being transferred to Rome, where they could possibly have been tried and executed as heretics. News of this banishment from Bohemia reached Dee while he was away on business in Germany, and he continued to Erfurt and thence to Cassel, where he enjoyed the protection of the landgrave Wilhelm IV.

If Dee failed to interest the vacillating Rudolf in his revelation, he ultimately found a patron in Bohemia whose power and reputation was second only to that of the emperor. Vilém Rozmberk (1535-1592) was burgrave at the imperial court and thus the holder of the highest dignity to which a Bohemian noble might aspire in the empire. His great Renaissance castle at Cesky Krumlov was the second largest in the realm after Hradschin, and his major interest in alchemy has already been mentioned. In the spring of 1586, Dee had met Vilém Rozmberk and evidently impressed him in a way that had not been possible with the emperor. With his vast domains in southern Bohemia and the traditional and rewarding allegiance of his family toward the Hapsburg dynasty, Vilém Rozmberk also entertained hopes of succeeding Stephen Báthory as king of Poland. He had already been married three times to German princesses but was widowed without issue. Since his brother Peter was a confirmed bachelor, a fourth marriage for Vilém was essential for the continuation of the Rozmberk dynasty. Dee's prophecies, once the lure of Laski with his own political ambitions, seemed highly prescient to Vilém Rozmberk at this juncture.

On May 1, 1586 (shortly before his departure for Leipzig and subsequent banishment from Bohemia), Dee was again invited to a conference



with Vilém Rozmberk at his palace on the banks of the river Moldau below the Hradschin in Prague. At this meeting Vilém informed Dee that he had been greatly impressed with everything Dee had told him earlier. In the meantime he had prayed to God for the forgiveness of his sins and for a sign as to how he might best serve him. In particular, he had asked God for guidance as to whether he should marry again, and, if so, into what family. Rozmberk was also evidently troubled by Dee's failure with Rudolf, for he also asked Dee to pray for the restoration of God's favor for the emperor. However, the question of his future nuptials was of paramount importance, for Dee records that Rozmberk said that "he would in all points, fulfill the advice and warning of God ... and would marry a maiden as he was willed. And did this day acknowledge and account himself a happy man." Dee himself was highly gratified by Rozmberk's piety and submission to the angelic revelation. They parted on the best of terms.<sup>23</sup>

Vilém Rozmberk's interest in the angelical revelation and prophecy proved to be Dee's salvation in Bohemia. Once he had heard of the Englishmen's expulsion from the country, Vilém promptly interceded with Rudolf and requested his permission for their return, provided that they resided on the Rozmberk domains. This license was granted by the emperor toward the end of August. Accordingly, and thus partly restored to imperial favor, Dee and Kelley returned from Germany, and, arriving on September 14, 1586, they came to live at the Rozmberk castle of Trebon in southern Bohemia.<sup>24</sup> Because Vilém had a long-standing interest in alchemy and maintained many Continental alchemists in his employ, Kelley swiftly sought to prove his own credentials in this field. Above all, Dee and Kelley continued to hold their spirit "actions" at Trebon, in which Vilém Rozmberk was a regular participant. In these revelations the high Bohemian dignitary found encouragement for the future of his house and his own regal ambitions.

Following his prayers and discussions with Dee on May 1 about a further marriage, Vilém Rozmberk was betrothed to Polyxena Pernštejn (1567–1642), the young daughter of Vratislav Pernštejn, the chancellor of the imperial court, whose dignity extended to all the lands of the Bohemian crown. The wedding took place at Vitus's Cathedral in Prague on

23. *Ibid.*, p. 420.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 435–436; *The Private Diary of Dr John Dee*, p. 21.

August 14, 1586, and rivaled a royal occasion in its splendor and pagantry; exceptionally, the emperor attended as a guest, a sure mark of the high esteem in which the Hapsburgs held these great Bohemian families. Vilém Rozmberk's young bride from another leading Bohemian dynasty was intended to secure the future of his own house. Eager for the confirmation of his hopes of heirs and the throne of Poland, Rozmberk attended spirit "actions" with Dee and Kelley at Trebon. On October 14, 1586, he heard a doom-laden voice speak of the wickedness and barrenness of worldly rulers. After prophesying more apocalyptic disasters, Kelley received a vision of a red cross and the voice commended Vilém as his chosen agent: "My promise is upon him that heareth amongst you.... I will this day make a Covenant with him, so that my Name and Spirit shall not depart from his House."<sup>25</sup>

Thus encouraged, Vilém continued to attend the "actions." However, in April 1587 he wrote a letter to Dee and Kelley containing eight unanswered questions for the angels about his prospects in Poland and his relations with the emperor, the pope, and the elector of Brandenburg. An "action" held two days later produced nothing but the familiar apocalyptic warnings and sermonizing generalities.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding, the Englishmen remained honored guests at Trebon for nearly two more years and Dee's *Private Diary* attests to his busy involvement in the affairs of Rozmberk and Bohemian politics. Dee finally departed from Trebon on March 11, 1589, Kelley having departed a fortnight earlier for Prague. Dee traveled through Germany, meeting Heinrich Khunrath, later renowned as a hermetic alchemist, whom he recommended to Vilém Rozmberk as court physician. After an intensive partnership lasting for six years, which had impelled both the Continental mission and a major shift in Dee's scientific efforts, Dee and Kelley were never to meet again. Kelley remained in Bohemia, attaining a great reputation as an alchemist and was ennobled by the emperor. His fortunes subsequently changed when he was imprisoned as a charlatan, and he perished as the result of a fall while trying to escape from Most castle in 1597.

What evidence then emerges from this brief chronicle of John Dee's mission in central Europe to link his activities to the later concerns of the

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25. *A True & Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Years between Dr John Dee and Some Spirits*, pp. 445-448.

26. *Ibid.*, [second pagination] pp. 1-4, 28-29.

Rosicrucian manifestos, which were published more than two decades after his departure? Frances Yates has rightly drawn attention to the personal links of Christian of Anhalt, the elector palatine Frederick, and Peter Vok Rozmberk, and her detective work on the presence of Dee's influences (the "monas" symbol and the Gabella treatise based on *Monas hieroglyphica*) in the Rosicrucian manifestos is highly suggestive. The way in which Dee's angelic revelation may have anticipated the Rosicrucian episode of 1614–1616 most probably concerns the manner in which his pioneering blend of astrology, alchemy, and cabalism hinted at a new dispensation that could avoid the strife of denominational conflict between Catholics and Protestants.

In this context, Dee's mission took place at a time when central Europe was still finely balanced in a state of universalism before the outbreak of religious strife. Emperor Rudolf II and the great Bohemian families of Rozmberk, Pernštejn, Boskowitz, and Zerotin were representative of a universalism, a tolerant humanism, and a Catholicism that was generous and aspired to a strong unified state rather than papal hagiocracy, a Protestantism that was tolerant to right and left. As R. J. W. Evans has noted, Rudolf's reign witnessed the passing of these old families in Bohemia.<sup>27</sup> By the time of Rudolf's death in 1612, these great Bohemian families were either extinct or in rapid decline. Their eclipse was symptomatic of a changing zeitgeist, where tolerance and universalism were giving way to strident confessional debate and hostility, a political landscape dominated by new families who wished to assert themselves on one or the other side of the Catholic–Protestant divide, a rivalry that would eventually erupt in the Thirty Years' War.

From 1600 on, the eclipse of this universalism in Bohemia and the wider empire was accompanied by a mood of pessimism and inflationary hopes that found a ready outlet in prophecy, millenarianism, and astrological portents. Evans observes that this chiliastic mood culminated in the Rosicrucian movement. The manifestos' call for a universal reform of society based on the language of alchemical transmutation or mystical rebirth certainly echoes the beliefs of earlier hermetic and occult reformers, including Giordano Bruno, Heinrich Khunrath, Johann Scultetus Montanus of Strigau, and, of course, John Dee. Seen in this light, the

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27. R. J. W. Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–42.

Rosicrucian manifestos and the ensuing furor appear as a kind of after-glow or late efflorescence of a corpus of hermetic and alchemical ideas current in the latter half of the sixteenth century, especially on the Continent.

In comparison with the contemporary mainstream interest in alchemy and hermeticism among patrons, scholars, and medical men in Germany and central Europe, and especially at Rudolf's court, Dee's mission in angelology and apocalyptic prophecy is somewhat eccentric. When Frances Yates claims that John Dee was a major and towering influence behind the Rosicrucian movement, she ignores the extensive alchemical and cabalistic culture already current in late sixteenth-century Bohemia. It may be true, however, that the extraordinary representations of John Dee and Edward Kelley concerning supercelestial prophecy and intervention in troubled times struck a chord that continued to resonate into the Rosicrucian era: hence the references to the "monas" symbol and Dee's text in the manifestos.

It is presently impossible to go any further. There remains, however, the strange parallel between Johann Valentin Andreae's allegory of a "chemical wedding" in the Rosicrucian revelation and John Dee's angelical counsel to Vilém Rozmberk concerning a fourth and final marriage to perpetuate his dynasty, which was indeed poised to play an even greater political role on the European stage. As we have seen, the Rozmberks represented a universalist tradition against denominational strife in central Europe. The angels' concern with the Rozmberk succession represented great political acumen, for history might have thereby turned out differently. But these hopes were betrayed, for Vilém died without issue in 1592, and the Rozmberk dynasty became extinct with the death of Peter Vok Rozmberk in 1611. That John Dee should have been instrumental in plans to secure a Rozmberk survival in 1586 as part of his hermetic-occult reform is an uncanny premonition of those millenarian demands for renovation and reformation in the Rosicrucian manifestos as the dark clouds of the Thirty Years' War gathered.

Heut / Heut / Heut /  
 Ist des Königs Hochzeit/  
 Bistu hierzu geboren/  
 Von Gott zu Freud erkoren/  
 Magst auff den Berge gehen /  
 Darauff drey Tempel stehen/  
 Daselbst die Geschichte besehen.  
 Halt Wache /  
 Dich selbst betrachte/  
 Wirst dich nit fleißig baden /  
 Die Hochzeit kan dir schaden.  
 Schad hat wer hie verzeicht/  
 Hüet sich wer ist zu leicht/  
 Vnden an stund : Sponsus & Sponsa.



Verse from *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*,  
 Johann Valentin Andreae, 1616.

4.

*The Deepest of  
the Rosicrucians*

*Michael Maier (1569–1622)*

JOSCELYN GODWIN



Emblema XLII, "*Let Nature be thy guide.*"  
Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 1618.



RANCES YATES WROTE, "I am entirely unable to understand all this," as she contemplated Maier's famous emblem of the alchemist about to cleave a giant egg with a sword,<sup>1</sup> "nor how it would be possible to work out a mathematical problem in terms of this kind of alchemy. But I believe that implications of this kind are present in the Maier emblems, and that Maier may have been the deepest of the 'Rosicrucians'."<sup>2</sup> As Dame Frances plainly hinted, Maier deserved a book-length study; but no one has yet accepted the challenge. The one and only monograph remains the Rev. Craven's classic *Count Michael Maier*,<sup>3</sup> 86 years old and still indispensable for anyone without a complete set of Maier's works on their shelves.

While we await the scholar willing to dedicate several years to studying and explaining this fascinating figure, the Munich professors Karin Figala and Ulrich Neumann are filling out the blanks in Maier's biography.<sup>4</sup> They have established, for instance, that Maier was born in Kiel, on the

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1. This is Emblem 8 of *Atalanta fugiens* (Oppenheim: De Bry, 1617).

2. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 83.

3. The Rev. J. B. Craven, D.D., *Count Michael Maier. Doctor of Philosophy and of Medicine. Alchemist, Rosicrucian, Mystic. 1568–1622*. Kirkwall: William Peace & Son, 1910. Facsimile ed., London: Dawson's of Pall Mall, 1968.

4. Karin Figala and Ulrich Neumann, "Ein früher Brief Michael Maiers (1568–1622) an Heinrich Rantzau (1526–1598). Einführung, lateinischer Originaltext und deutsche Übersetzung." In *Mathemata* (Festschrift für Helmuth Gericke), ed. Folkerts and Lindgren. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985, pp. 327–357. Figala and Neumann, "Michael Maier (1569–1622): New Bio-Bibliographical Material." In *Alchemy Revisited. Proceedings of the International Conference on the History of Alchemy at the University of Groningen*, ed. von Martels. Leiden: Brill, 1990, pp. 34–50. Figala and Neumann, "À propos de Michel Maier: quelques découvertes bio-bibliographiques." In *Actes du Colloque international "Alchimie—art, histoire et mythes*. Paris, 14–16 March 1991.



Baltic Sea, in the summer of 1569. His father, Peter Maier (variously spelled) was an embroiderer in gold and pearls who worked for the nobility of Holstein, then under Danish rule. Peter Maier died before 1587, when Michael was sent at the expense of a maternal relative to study philosophy and the Liberal arts at the University of Rostock.<sup>5</sup> Between 1589 and 1591 he made one or more journeys to Padua, where he was honored with the title of Poet Laureate. In 1592 he obtained the Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Frankfurt an der Oder. His academic training was completed with the degree of Doctor of Medicine, granted him by the University of Basel in 1596.

Now in his late twenties, Maier returned to the Baltic to practice as a physician in Holstein and East Prussia, bearing the three "titles from the Schools" to which he proudly alludes in the caption of his sole surviving portrait: Ph.D., M.D., and poet laureate.<sup>6</sup> His earliest publications date from this period of medical study and practice. With the exception of his dissertation, they are addresses to his friends, printed in small editions for private distribution:

"Semper usitatum fuisse, Illustris et magne vir" (Rostock, 1590)  
Letter to Heinrich Rantzau, dated from the University of Rostock,  
18 June 1590<sup>7</sup>

"De epilepsia" (Basel, 1596)  
M.D. dissertation, University of Basel, 1596. No copy known.<sup>8</sup>

*Eidyllion gratulatorium* (Basel: Konrad Waldkirch, 1596)  
Ded. Johannes Sagittarius, who had graduated M.D.  
in the same class as Maier.<sup>9</sup>

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5. Figala & Neumann, "Ein früher Brief," p. 329

6. The portrait was included as a frontispiece in Maier's *Symbola aureae mensae* and in *Atalanta Fugiens*.

7. Figala & Neumann, "Ein früher Brief," pp. 338–349, giving Latin text and German translation. The fact of the letter's printing, in an edition of 100 copies, is mentioned at the end of the text. Only a Ms. copy is known: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 9737, tom. II (=m), f. 27r–30v.

8. Figala & Neumann, "Ein früher Brief," p. 352, n. 23.

9. Figala & Neumann, "Ein früher Brief," p. 335, states that only a Ms. copy is known: Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Codex latinus 17,923.

*Verba nupta in nuptias M. Mart. Braschii, Prof. Rostoch., & Doroth. Badeniae Rost. 1597* (Rostock, 1597)

Ded. Martin Brasche, on his marriage with Dorothea Badenia. No copy known.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after Maier's return to his homeland, he witnessed a remarkable cure effected through alchemy, which reoriented him entirely. With the systematic habit that he retained throughout his life, he began by making a glossary of alchemical terms. Then he studied the theoretical aspect, sifting the good authors from the bad, and made a first-hand study of natural phenomena, especially those of mining regions. Finally he proceeded to the practice, setting up a laboratory in Kiel with his brother-in-law (that is, his sister's husband; Maier never married). His alchemical work lasted from 1602 until 1607 or 1608, at the end of which time Maier "had obtained, by God's grace, the Universal Medicine, of a bright lemon color."<sup>11</sup> He was unable to proceed further owing to technical difficulties. Besides, his avocation had made him an object of hostile curiosity to the provincial burghers of Kiel, and the long experiments had exhausted his funds.

Under such conditions, where else would a three-quarters successful alchemist turn, if not to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II? Around the middle of 1608, Maier went to Prague and presented himself, armed with his Universal Medicine, at the Hradcany Palace. It took him about a year to penetrate the circles of courtly obstruction surrounding the reclusive Emperor. Perhaps the door was opened by the publication of his first alchemical book:

*De Medicina regia et vere heroica, Coelidonia* (Prague, 1609)<sup>12</sup>

On 19 September 1609 he entered the Emperor's service, and ten days later was raised to the nobility. The caption of Maier's portrait lists, along with his academic honors, the three titles that Rudolf gave him: Personal

10. Figala & Neumann, "Ein früher Brief," pp. 335, 352, n. 24.

11. Ulrich Neumann, "Michael Maier (1569–1622), Arzt, Alchemist, Schriftsteller und Rosenkreuzer: Erste Erträge eines bio-bibliographischen Forschungsprojektes." In *Mitteilungen. Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker. Fachgruppe Geschichte der Chemie* 8 (1993), pp. 6–16. Here: p. 9, quoting from Maier's letter to Fürst August von Anhalt-Plötzkau, 5 August 1610, discovered by Dr. Carlos Gilly in the town archive of Oranienbaum, Russia.

12. Neumann, "Michael Maier," p. 7, mentions a unicum in the Royal Library, Copenhagen.

Physician, Count Palatine, and Knight Exemptus. This ennoblement of a person who had contributed to cultural life was not unusual in Rudolf's court. Others so honored included the diplomat and humanist Johann Mathias Wacker von Wackenfels, the poet and bibliophile Jiri Bartholdus Pontanus, the painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo, and the alchemists Johann Müller von Müllenfels and Sir Edward Kelley.<sup>13</sup>

Maier's golden years in Prague were few. He had arrived at the melancholy twilight of Rudolf's reign, which ended with the Emperor's forced abdication in favor of his brother Matthias in April 1611 and his death, a virtual prisoner in his own palace, on 20 January 1612. Maier, along with many other courtiers and artists, was obliged to seek another patron. According to Professor Neumann,<sup>14</sup> he turned to three alchemically-inclined rulers: August von Anhalt-Plötzkau, Moritz von Hessen-Kassel, and Ernst III von Holstein-Schauenburg. But instead of settling in any of their domains, Maier went next to England, arriving before Christmas 1611 and remaining there until 1616.

Maier addressed himself immediately to King James I and VI. His visiting-card, now in the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh (GD 242/212), took a most unusual form. It was a Christmas greeting to the King, made of a folded parchment 33 by 24 inches, on which a central Rose-Cross emblem made out of words in gold and red is flanked by four Latin poems. Two of these poems address James, while the others are put into the mouths of four archangels and two shepherds attendant on Christ's Nativity. The parchment includes a musical canon in six parts representing the songs of the angels and shepherds.<sup>15</sup> All in all, it is a most curious object, displaying the verbal ingenuity and the multimedia approach that marked Maier's creative style. It is also the earliest known appearance of the Rose-Cross symbol in England.

Although the Rosicrucian manifestos, the *Fama* and the *Confessio*, were not published until 1614 and 1615 respectively, the *Fama* at least was circulating in manuscript by 1611. In his study of the early Rosicrucian documents, Dr. Carlos Gilly quotes a letter of December 1611 from

13. See R. J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World. A Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973): Wacker, p. 155; Pontanus, p. 159; Arcimboldo, p. 166; Müller, p. 209; Kelley, p. 226.

14. Neumann, "Michael Maier," p. 10.

15. See Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, ed. Godwin (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1989), pp. 207–208, for a description of the manuscript and a transcription of the music.

August von Anhalt to Carl Widemann in which Anhalt records receiving a transcript of the *Fama* from Adam Haslmeyer as a New Year's gift.<sup>16</sup> As mentioned above, Maier had written to August von Anhalt on 10 August 1610, describing his alchemical work,<sup>17</sup> and, according to Professor Neumann, he sought employment with this ruler after Rudolf's deposition. August von Anhalt was the brother of the Calvinist prince Christian von Anhalt, of whom Frances Yates says: "Anhalt was, of course, the moving spirit behind the 'activist' tradition in German Protestantism, the tradition which had been looking for leaders throughout the early part of the century and which by now (by the time the Rosicrucian manifestos were actually printed) had fixed on Frederick V, Elector Palatine, as the leader destined to head the movement and to lead it to victory."<sup>18</sup> Yates's surmise that the Rosicrucian movement was intimately linked with the political plans of the German Protestant rulers is only strengthened by this earlier appearance of the Rose-Cross symbol, adorning a greeting from a German envoy to King James.

These political plans reached a crucial stage in the following year, 1612. On 16 October, Frederick landed in England as suitor of King James's daughter Elizabeth. At that moment, Maier was preparing another Christmas greeting, this time addressed to the 18-year-old Henry, Prince of Wales. This oversized parchment is now in the British Library (Royal Mss. 14.B.xvi). It is made entirely from words, both poetic and prose, arranged in various geometrical shapes so as to form acrostics. The text is full of classical allusions that are turned to praise of the Prince, whose personal gifts had made him so popular and raised such hopes for his future as King of England. Alas, they came to nothing: Prince Henry died of typhoid fever on 6 November 1612, and never received his Christmas cards. But this tragic death did not prevent the official announcement at Christmas of Elector Frederick and Princess Elizabeth's engagement, followed in February 1613 by Frederick's investment as a Knight of the Garter and by the wedding.<sup>19</sup> The couple departed for their home in Heidelberg Castle in April 1613.

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16. *Cimelia Rhodostaurotica. Die Rosenkreuzer im Spiegel der zwischen 1510 und 1660 entstandenen Handschriften und Drücke*. Exhibition catalogue, ed. Carlos Gilly. Amsterdam: In de Pelikan, 1995, p. 40.

17. Neumann, "Michael Maier," p. 7.

18. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. 53.

19. See the chapter "A Royal Wedding" in Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, pp. 1-14.

Maier's presence in England during the preceding year was almost certainly the fulfilment of a diplomatic mission, preparing the ground for this dynastic marriage. His status as a Count Palatine and a familiar of the eirenic Rudolf (from whom James had earlier received presents<sup>20</sup>) would have made him an acceptable envoy, while his contacts in 1611 with three German Protestant rulers suggests who he was now working for: the coalition that was forming in the face of an aggressively Catholic Habsburg monarchy, and which hoped to enroll King James as an ally of their cause.

Did Maier know Robert Fludd, as is often surmised? There is no reason to believe the tale, often repeated by modern Rosicrucians, that Maier initiated Fludd into the Brotherhood;<sup>21</sup> even less, the assertion of Clymer that Maier was its "First Supreme Grand Master."<sup>22</sup> All the same, it is impossible to imagine that Maier and Fludd never met each other. One man whom Maier definitely knew in London was James's personal physician, Sir William Paddy. To Paddy he dedicated his first alchemical book, *Arcana arcanissima* (1614). Paddy was a close friend of Robert Fludd, receiving the dedication of Fludd's *Medicina Catholica* (1629). The first book of Fludd's "History of the Macrocosm and Microcosm," *Utriusque cosmi... historia* (1617), was dedicated to the King, at a time when James was still friendly to the Hermetic philosophy and to his son-in-law Frederick. The conclusion has already been drawn by Frances Yates:<sup>23</sup> that while in London, Maier frequented the circle of Hermetic physicians close to the Court, just as in Prague he had formed part of a similar circle around Rudolf. And he brought to this English circle, three years before the *Fama* was published, the news of the rising movement in Protestant Germany, whose spiritual wing went under the sign of the Rose-Cross.

Maier stayed in England for nearly five years. He must have devoted much of his time to research and writing, for within two years of his return to Germany in mid-1616, he was able to publish eleven books:

20. Evans, *Rudolf II*, p. 81n., mentions a gift of a celestial globe and a clock in 1609.

21. Already in 1924, A. E. Waite, in *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (reprint ed., New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, n.d.), p. 324, poured cold water on "modern gratuitous inventions which represent Michael Maier carrying the Rosy Cross in his pocket to England and initiating Robert Fludd...."

22. R. Swinburne Clymer, *The Book of Rosicruciae* (Quakertown, Pa.: Philosophical Publishing Co., 1946), vol. I, p. 177.

23. *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, p. 84.

*De circulo physico quadrato* [On the physical circle squared] (Oppenheim: Jennis, 1616)

Ded. Moritz von Hessen. Preface dated from Frankfurt, August 1616

*Lusus serius* [Serious game] (Oppenheim: Jennis, 1616)

Ded. Francis Anthony, Jacobus Mosanus, Christian Rumphius. Preface dated from Frankfurt, September 1616

*Examen fucorum pseudo-chymicorum* [Examination of the pseudo-chemical drones] (Frankfurt: de Bry, 1617)

Ded. Joachim Hirschberger, M.D. Preface dated from Frankfurt, September 1616

*Jocus severus* [Severe joke] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1617)

Ded. to German lovers of chemistry, especially the Brethren of the Rose-Cross

*Silentium post clamores* [Silence after clamor] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1617)

Issued anonymously

*Symbola aureae mensae* [Symbols of the golden table] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1617)

Ded. Ernst III, Fürst von Holstein-Schauenburg. Preface dated from Frankfurt, December 1616

*Atalanta fugiens* [Atalanta fleeing] (Oppenheim: de Bry, 1617)

Ded. Christoph Reinhart of Mühlhausen. Preface dated from Frankfurt, August 1617

*Tripus aureus* [Golden tripod] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1618)

Ded. Johannes Hartmann Beyer. Preface dated from Frankfurt, January 1618

*Themis aurea* [Golden Themis] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1618)

No dedication

*Viatorium, hoc est, De Montibus Planetarum Septem seu Metallorum* [Guidebook, i.e., of the mountains of the seven planets or metals] (Oppenheim: de Bry, 1618)

Ded. Christian von Anhalt. Preface dated from Frankfurt, September 1618

*Verum inventum, hoc est, Munera Germaniae* [True invention, i.e., the gifts of Germany] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1619)

Ded. the Town Councillors of Frankfurt. Preface dated September 1618

Only after this date did Maier's production slow down to about one book a year. To complete this shortlist of his publications, here are his remaining works:

*Tractatus de volucris arborea* [Treatise on the tree-bird] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1619)

Ded. Johannes Hardtmuth

*Septimana philosophia* [Philosophic week] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1620)

Ded. Christian Wilhelm, Archbishop of Magdeburg. Preface dated from Magdeburg, January 1620

*Civitas corporis humani* [City of the human body] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1621)

Ded. to medical men and to sufferers from gout. Preface dated from Magdeburg, August 1620

*Cantilenae intellectuales de phoenice redivivo* [Intellectual songs of the revived phoenix] (Rome, 1622; Rostock, 1623)

Ded. Herzog Friedrich III von Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf. Preface dated from Rostock, August 1622

*Ulysses, hoc est, Sapientia seu Intelligentia* [Ulysses, i.e., wisdom and intelligence] (Frankfurt: Jennis, 1624)

Published posthumously

The Prefaces show that Maier lived for two years in Frankfurt am Main, perhaps supported by the publishers of his numerous books. He dedicated these either to fellow-scholars or to Hermetically-inclined Protestant rulers. In 1618 he was rewarded by Moritz of Hessen, to whom earlier in the year he had presented copies of all his books, with the official title of "Medicus und Chymicus von Hauß aus," that is, Original Physician and [Al]chemist.<sup>24</sup>

A word should be said here about Maier's social and economic position. Born the son of a prosperous craftsman, he had been made a Count Palatine and Knight Exemptus. But Emperor Rudolf had not thought of

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24. Neumann, "Michael Maier," p. 11.

adding a grant of land that would provide Maier with an income commensurate with such titles: he left him in the uncomfortable condition of an unlanded nobleman. Maier was henceforth barred from modest employment such as tutoring or the general practice of medicine. Yet having no property or inherited wealth, he had to work for somebody. His only hope was for attachment to some greater nobleman's household, or for diplomatic status such as he presumably enjoyed in England.

It is interesting to compare Maier's social situation with that of Robert Fludd. Robert's father, Sir Thomas Fludd, had been knighted for military services to the Crown, and acquired the manor of Bearsted in Kent. Robert, as a younger son, did not inherit the manor but was expected to fend for himself by joining the army or one of the learned professions: Law, Medicine, and the Church. He worked for several years as a tutor to European noblemen's sons, then settled in London as a physician with a flourishing and profitable practice. Count Michael Maier, in contrast, was forced into a kind of upper-class beggary.

There is no evidence of why Maier left Moritz's household after only two years, except the obvious political circumstances. The death of the Emperor Matthias, the rebellion of the Bohemian estates, the invitation of Elector Frederick of the Palatinate to the throne of Bohemia, the battle of the White Mountain outside Prague with its catastrophic consequences for the Protestant league: all these weighed heavily on Moritz and threatened his little realm. Already extremely pressed for military funds, he had neither time nor money for the esoteric diversions that he had pursued for many years. Nor did Maier have any prospect of a quiet life with war on the doorstep.

No wonder that Maier moved north. In 1620 we find him in Magdeburg, where he had a potential patron in the Markgraf Christian Wilhelm von Brandenburg. Two years later, in 1622, he was petitioning Herzog Friedrich III von Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf, Prince of Norway, apparently with a view to returning to his Baltic homeland. But his plans never matured, for Maier died in Magdeburg in the late summer of that year. His last book, the forty-page essay *Ulysses*, sounded a valedictory note, imbued with the Christian Stoicism that Maier had perforce to cultivate in his last years. It treats of "how to recover from the shipwreck of bodily goods and fortune" through the virtues of Ulysses, that is, the intellect.



Maier's travels had almost come full circle, taking him as far south as Padua, as far west as London, and all around the states of Germany. While modest by our standards, they had succeeded in giving him a global consciousness, rare for his time. He was aware of the New World, he had a sense of the earth's other continents, and he conceived of Europe, for all its family quarrels, as an entity. Perhaps this was easier in the days when one could travel all around Europe, confident that anyone worth talking to could speak the same language: Latin.

In the *Symbola aureae mensae*, Maier gives expression to this global view in a long disquisition on the four continents. Seen as if from outside the earth, they take on the shape of a cross: the cross of the four cardinal directions and the four elements. Europe, he says, corresponds to earth, the Americas to water, Asia to air, and Africa to fire.<sup>25</sup> He justifies these attributions with a wealth of geographical knowledge. In this way he was able to grasp the external world, classify its parts, and make sense of what we would accept as random or natural dispositions of land and sea. Much of Maier's work was on these lines: organizing human experience so that it made sense within his private world, which was in turn organized according to traditional cosmology, arithmology, and Hermetic concepts.

The *Septimana philosophica* illustrates Europe as a female figure, a conceit that Maier explains in that semi-scientific, semi-emblematic way that is so typical of the period.<sup>26</sup> He is discussing the shape that people see on the face of the moon. Some see a hare, some a man, others a woman. What is this shape? It is the reflection of the woman-like shape of the continent of Europe, says Maier. This is caused by the sunlight striking the earth's surface and sending the image back to the moon. People in India, in consequence, must see different lunar markings: they see a reflection of India. Maier's conclusion was entirely logical, because the astronomical doctrine of 1620 held, following Aristotle, that the surface of the moon was perfectly smooth and polished, acting as a mirror. This was before Galileo had pointed out that the telescope shows the lunar surface to have mountains and valleys, just like the earth. However, Maier goes on to say that Europe *is* a woman, and that Germany is her belly. Speaking of the Brethren of the Rose-Cross and their *Fama* and *Confessio*,

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25. *Symbolae aureae mensae*, p. 572.

26. *Septimana philosophica*, pp. 30–31.

recently published in Germany, he says that Germany is pregnant with great things for the future.<sup>27</sup> Through this numinous image, astronomy has merged into sacred geography.

Maier was strongly conscious of being German, and proud of it. His journey to England only intensified his patriotism. Again in the *Symbola aureae mensae*, in the chapter on English alchemy, he offers some impressions of England and the English.<sup>28</sup> He celebrates in a poem the generous hospitality he enjoyed there, but adds that he was much offended by the English actors because in their public plays they "introduced Germans as drunk and babbling, mixing in a few Teutonic words, showing the women almost as beasts, the Emperor as a petty prince..." (p. 483). Maier in turn criticizes the English as barbaric pronouncers of Latin, and even of their own language: "In this depraved state of literacy, there are many thousands of words pronounced by other nations that they cannot write as they are pronounced. The word *Church* they pronounce *Tziertz*..." (p. 495).

Nothing reinforced Maier's German patriotism so much as the Rosicrucian movement, which he was inordinately proud to see arising from his own soil. The movement appears as the crown of Germany's many gifts to humankind in his patriotic work, *Verum inventum*. Maier also devoted two books solely to the defence of the Rosicrucians. The first, *Silentium post clamores*, is his sole book in German, evidently written with a more popular audience in mind; it is a defence of the Brethren for being so silent and unresponsive after giving out the *Fama* and the *Confessio* to the world. The second, *Themis aurea*, is one of the two books of Maier's that was translated into English in the seventeenth century.<sup>29</sup> It is again a defence of the Brethren, adducing arguments in favor of the rules given in their manifestos: keeping anonymity, healing the sick gratis, and so on. Like all of Maier's works, these are full of fascinating asides and digressions, to which a book-length study could scarcely do justice.

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27. "For Europe is with child and will bring forth a strong child...." *Confessio*, English ed. (London: Giles Calvert, 1652), p. 17. Facsimile ed., *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of R. C.* (Margate: Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, 1923).

28. *Symbola aureae mensae*, pp. 482-496.

29. *Themis aurea. The Laws of the Fraternity of the Rosie Cross*. London: N. Brooke, 1656. Facsimile ed., Preface by Manly Palmer Hall, Los Angeles: Philosophical Research Society, 1976. The other English translation is *Lusus serius: or, Serious Passe-time*. London: Humphrey Moseley & Thomas Heath, 1654.

The Rosicrucian event, like the map of Europe, had somehow to be incorporated into Maier's private cosmos. A ready receptacle was there in his belief in the mystery schools, which he reiterates many times in his various works. The formidable edifice of the *Symbola aureae mensae* is built around the concept of twelve mystery schools, appearing in chronological order in twelve different nations. The earliest was the school of Hermes Trismegistus in ancient Egypt, followed by their inheritors the Hebrews. Then came the schools of Greece and Rome, the Arabians, and the various European nations. Other books of Maier's give differing lists of the schools, but the principle is constant. I do not believe that he ever uses the term "philosophia [or theologia] perennis," but he obviously conceived of a "perennial philosophy," a traditional wisdom handed down from the ancient days and manifesting alike in pagan nations and in those belonging to the three Abrahamic religions. The last in line of these mystery schools was the Rosicrucian Brotherhood, appearing in the center of Europe and addressing the modern age.<sup>30</sup> Maier felt proud that such wise men existed in his own country. Although he never claimed to belong to them, he left his readers in no doubt of his sympathy with Rosicrucian principles and aspirations.

Frances Yates makes it plain that by a "Rosicrucian" she means not a card-carrying member of the Brotherhood—there were none—but someone who shared the ideals set forth in the manifestos. The *Fama*, the *Confessio*, and the *Chemical Wedding*, which put into circulation the name and myth of Christian Rosenkreutz, were in this view only part of what Yates called the "Rosicrucian Enlightenment," a movement of intellectual and spiritual history that unfolded between John Dee's arrival in Germany in 1583 and the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620.<sup>31</sup> If one accepts these definitions, with their stern implied judgment on later "Rosicrucian" orders, Michael Maier was certainly a Rosicrucian. The teasing question is, did he know that the *Fama* and *Confessio* were written by Johann Valentin Andreae and his circle for private circulation in manuscript; that these manifestos then "escaped" into print against the will of their authors, causing the latter embarrassment and even danger, which Andreae later dissembled by calling the whole

30. See especially *Symbola aureae mensae*, pp. 288–289.

31. See, e.g., Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, pp. 220–222, 231.

affair a "ludibrium," a prank?<sup>32</sup> If Maier did know this, then his lifelong praise, defence, and citation of the Rosicrucians must have been undertaken in order to turn the prank to deadly earnest, because he so passionately agreed with the sentiments expressed therein. If Maier did not know, which I think more probable, he elected to join an enterprise whose reality he did not doubt for a moment. As he says in *Themis aurea*, he accepted that the Brethren did not and would not make themselves known, because this was the best way to achieve their ideals in an imperfect world. People such as Maier and Fludd were living proof of the wisdom of their strategy, for here were minds of exceptional caliber devoting themselves to the Rosicrucian cause without even needing personal contact or initiation.

Maier's contribution to the Rosicrucian movement took several different forms. First, he practiced the decreed profession of healing. We can get an idea of the kind of physician he was from his book on the gout, *Civitas corporis humani*, and from the *Themis aurea*. In both books he rails against the common run of doctors, having no good word for the Galenists—followers of the official medical system, based on balancing the four humors—and the practitioners of pedantic, book-based medicine. He admits that Galenic medicine has its good points, but says that one cannot remain tied to ancient texts. The chief alternative medicine in Maier's time was Paracelsian, which relied on chemical remedies, including ones made from metals. Maier also acknowledges that chemical treatment may be useful in certain circumstances, but is not a cure-all. A third system was the traditional folk-medicine of herbs or "simples." Maier approves of this, too, saying that sometimes the herbal remedy is all that is needed. He adds that the same herbs may alter their character according to the solar and planetary influences on them (*Themis aurea*, English ed., p. 49). One glaring omission remains: the Universal Medicine that Maier claimed to have made during his period of alchemical work in Kiel. One would have thought that this made all other remedies redundant.

Maier was a practical man with a serious interest in technology, not content simply to read Aristotle and Pliny but willing to get his hands dirty.

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32. This summary of the facts is based on the research of Dr. Carlos Gilly and the publications of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, Amsterdam. See *Cimelia Rhodostaurótica* (see above, n. 16) and Dr. Gilly's book *Adam Haslmayr. Der erste Verkünder der Manifeste der Rosenkreuzer* (Amsterdam: In de Pelikan, 1994).

He was particularly interested in mining and metallurgy, and wrote with authority on these subjects. During his Kiel period, he made a special journey to Hungary to obtain some unnamed substance that could be found nowhere else. In *Symbola aureae mensae* he describes the different ways in which gold grows in other minerals, how it is found in the mines of Hungary and Bohemia, and the methods used to separate gold and other metals from their ores.<sup>33</sup> There is nothing alchemical about that. In the *Viatorium*, a treatise on the seven planets and the corresponding metals, he takes the metals one by one and describes their roles in making gold, in compounding the "tincture" (the Universal Medicine), and in general medicine. Alchemy apart, he writes of normal chemical and metallurgical processes with easy familiarity.

The science and technology of Maier's day, compared to our own, were not yet closed to the world of anomalies and wonders that now constitute the category of "rejected knowledge." Besides being a scientist by our definition, Maier was also a kind of Fortean. That is, he shared some of the interests that are associated today with the research and writings of Charles Fort. His most Fortean book is the *Tractatus de volucris arborea*, whose title refers to the barnacle goose. Maier's years in Britain seem to have included a trip to Scotland, for he testifies to having seen as well as heard of this creature there. It is a large barnacle that hangs onto rotting timber from a stem and somewhat resembles an embryo bird. After developing under water, it was believed to turn into a goose and emerge from the sea. Maier took this old wives' tale seriously enough to write a whole book about it. His motive was complex. The barnacle goose was not just a freak of nature, but an example of spontaneous generation, in which there was little reason to disbelieve before the use of the microscope. Spontaneous generation involves a virgin birth, or a birth not preceded by sexual intercourse; hence it is symbolic of the birth of Christ. In the solemn spirit of the Medieval bestiaries, with their moralized animal stories, Maier presents the barnacle goose to his readers as an emblem of the Savior.

The *Tractatus de volucris arborea* is filled out with other anomalies. It has passages about the incubi and succubi, and other denizens of that liminal world between the physical and the psychic domains (or, in the

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33. *Symbola aureae mensae*, pp. 523–529.

terminology of occultism, between the physical and the astral planes). This compendium of natural wonders and freaks includes the creatures that live in caverns, which Maier's miner friends had seen and heard, and the Green Children who once emerged from a cave in England and lived for a time in the surface world.

Some would classify alchemy as a Fortean topic, especially if attention is paid to the few unimpeachable witnesses of transmutation. Maier did not call himself an alchemist: he was a *chymicus*. In the Preface of his first book on the subject, *Arcana arcanissima*, he says "I speak of Chymia, not Alchimia which is the mother of deceptions, adulterating metals, not really transmuting them."<sup>34</sup> The short but densely-packed book *Examen fucorum pseudo-chymicorum* describes the frauds of the alchemists, the "drones" (*fuci*) of the title, who resemble worker-bees but do nothing useful. These pseudo-chemists, who glory in the name of alchemists, are the familiar "puffers" of anti-alchemical polemic. Maier lists fifty-six ways in which they fool the public, promising to make gold with no expense or trouble at all. What, he asks, could be more unlikely than that? (pp. 10–13) Among those against whom he warns the reader are Cornelius Agrippa, "who says somewhere that he could extract the subtle spirit from gold. What sort of man he was appears from his letters" (p. 41); and Edward Kelly, whose tincture was nothing but a colored extract from gold. Although the Emperor was assured that Kelly had transmuted hundreds of pounds with it, it profited him nothing. (p. 42)

Maier's Chymia had nothing to do with making gold. Transmuting base metals into gold, he says, is not even useful to humanity, because putting too much gold into circulation would wreck the economy, encouraging luxury and eventually bringing down society, which does not benefit by excessive riches. For this reason the ancient Egyptians preserved the secrets of chemistry with the strictest laws. If the Egyptian hierophants had let their secrets abroad, their country would have been swamped with immigrants hoping to get rich (p. 29). Maier does not want to say dogmatically that silver and gold cannot be made, or extracted from other metals, but he is highly skeptical about the examples of transmutation that he has been shown, such as the nails, half iron and half gold, made in the laboratory of the Grand Duke of Florence. He comments suspiciously on the

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34. *Arcana arcanissima*, f. A2'.

disparity of weights, the gold parts weighing twice as much as they would have weighed when they were iron (p. 30).

Having learned of all the frauds of the alchemists or pseudo-chemists, one is entitled to ask what exactly Maier's Chymia was, to which, after all, he dedicated the bulk of his writings. It was practical and involved work in the laboratory, though without needing elaborate equipment. A common furnace and fire will do, Maier says, so long as the degree of heat is observable; "one vessel, one furnace, one matter are sufficient" (p. 28). He puts it plainly in his first great work, *Arcana arcanissima*: Chymia has as its goal not the goldmaking of the alchemists but the preparation of the Universal or "Golden" Medicine that is a gift from God.<sup>35</sup> Maier's most direct ancestor in this regard is the canon of Erfurt, Basil Valentine, whose *Twelve Keys* he translated from German into Latin and published in his *Tripus aurea*. One finds in Basil the same intense piety, the familiarity with practical chemistry, the playful introduction of pagan deities, and the ultimate goal of healing, rather than of making gold.<sup>36</sup> To achieve the Universal Medicine was for Maier, as for Basil, the highest goal of a physician, and the most Christian thing one could do.

In the *Symbola aureae mensae* Maier offers a prayer to Christ the Savior that sums up his attitude:

I, from the deep submission of my mind, in prayers, that ever I may offer with tongue and heart, beseech thee, who by ordinary means hast instituted and given a useful Medicine to the human race, whereas thou hast removed and cured even incurable diseases by thy Divine virtue acting in this world, and hast raised the Medical faculty by its name above all other arts and sciences as if it were blessed, pray and beseech that thou mayest never deny me the presence of thy grace, by which I may seek the said Medicine, in whose cause I have suffered and persisted, wandering and investigating through so much labor, work, expense, and danger, as thou knowest; that I may obtain

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35. *Arcana arcanissima*, f. A2'-A3.

36. On Basil's chemistry, see John Read, *Prelude to Chemistry. An Outline of Alchemy, Its Literature and Relationships* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1936), pp. 183-211. On his spirituality, see A. E. Waite, *The Secret Tradition in Alchemy. Its Development and Records* (London: Kegan Paul, 1926), pp. 163-176.

what I seek, and what I have obtained, use for the glory of thy name and for the relief of the poor. (pp. 589–590)

Beside his knowledge of chemistry and technology, Maier was trained in the liberal arts, and urged every aspiring chemist to obtain like training. In *Examen fucorum pseudo-chymicorum* he lists the arts that are beneficial, giving a slightly different list from the canonical Trivium of Grammar, Dialectic or Logic, and Rhetoric, and the Quadrivium of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music or Harmony, and Astronomy: he omits Music and adds Physics and Medicine.<sup>37</sup> He himself was an expert Latin grammarian, and could wield a syllogism as well as the next man. *Symbola aureae mensae* is his tour-de-force in this regard: it contains thirty-six arguments against chemistry, stated in the scholastic language derived from Aristotle, together with thirty-six refutations put into the mouths of the twelve historical alchemists attending the “golden table.” Maier disliked Scholasticism because it was Catholic, no doubt, and also because it was Aristotelian. Like other Renaissance Hermeticists, he was a staunch defender of Plato against Aristotle: “What shall we think of that monster Aristotle, who (as it is reported) was so spiteful to his Master Plato, that he caused many of his works to be burnt that he might shine brighter?”<sup>38</sup>

Maier’s favorite use of language was in writing Latin poetry, which he did with gusto and ingenuity. He had, as we recall, received the poet’s laurel crown while still in his twenties. Few of his works are without one or more poems, and his swan-song, *Cantilenae intellectuales de phoenice redivivo*, is entirely in verse. In conformity with his encyclopedic approach, of which I will say more, Maier’s Latin poetry is a compendium of styles, meters, and verse forms. Far from adhering to the Humanist principle of only imitating the best classical poets, Maier happily uses the rhyming Latin verse that arose in the Middle Ages. The *Cantilenae*, for instance, are in rhyming Anacreontic verse, a bastard of classical and Medieval techniques.

Maier and his friends, who often contributed verses to the frontmatter of his books, enjoyed swapping clever Latin poems. They probably also played erudite word-games, for Maier loved Latin anagrams and acrostics,

37. *Examen fucorum pseudo-chymicorum*, pp. 14–16.

38. *Themis aurea*, English ed., p. 75.



as we can see from his Christmas greetings to the English court. Did he also know Greek? *Arcana arcanissima* contains Greek anagrams of the name "Michael Maier":

MIXAHA MAIHPOΣ	— <i>Michael Maier</i>
HA IOΣ XAPMA HMI	— <i>The sun is my delight</i>
MH AMA HPI XIAOΣ	— <i>Not as early as the grass</i> [?]
MH HMAI XAIAPOΣ	— <i>I am not lukewarm</i>

But the occurrence of Greek in his books is so rare that I doubt that he knew the language at all well. If he had, his natural bent for wordplay and the display of erudition could not have resisted the opportunities offered.

Maier the *littérateur* was also blessed with a sense of humor, even though it may not coincide with our own. Two of his books with similar titles, *Lusus serius* and *Jocus severus*, are fables about birds and other creatures. *Jocus* presents Chymia personified as the Owl, the bird of Minerva and of nocturnal wisdom. She is attacked by other birds, the Parrot, the Nightingale, the Crow, and all, each claiming to be the best. The Phoenix acts as judge, as they come one by one and try to persuade the assembled company that they are superior. The Owl however prevails and receives the highest accolade. *Lusus* is similar in presenting a number of creatures that try to outdo Mercury in their claims to be useful to humanity. The creatures are the Calf, Sheep, Goose, Oyster, Silkworm, and Flax. The Goose, for example, says that without me, you'd sleep very cold and hard in your beds; you couldn't write without my quills, and besides, you eat me for Christmas dinner. Flax says: I'm just as important, because besides providing edible seeds and oil, I clothe you. If you didn't have linen underwear to change, you would have to be forever taking baths, like the ancient Romans. Then when you wear out your clothes, you turn me into paper, without which goose-quills are useless. But Mercury points out that he is the source from which all the metals come, and then lists the manifold uses of gold, silver, copper, tin, iron, and lead. Naturally he wins the contest to determine the greatest helper of humankind.

Maier's versatility as a writer enabled him to produce sharp polemic, especially when moved by three particular abuses: the pretensions of alchemists and pseudo-chemists (in *Examen fucorum*); the greed and stultification of the medical profession (in *Themis aurea*, where they are contrasted with the Rosicrucians, who heal gratis); and the wealth of the

Catholic Church (in *Symbola aureae mensae*, where he gives statistics of its holdings in France and Italy). Aside from his poetry and music (see below), he was more scholarly than creative, being immensely learned in the two fields of alchemical literature and classical mythology. He had at his fingertips the entire available corpus of ancient, Arab, and Medieval alchemical texts. Although from the twentieth century viewpoint Maier's own time may appear to have been the golden age of alchemy, he paid little attention to modern writers. He admired his fellow German Paracelsus, and quoted Heinrich Khunrath and Oswald Croll. But his whole bent was historical, in conformity with the idea of a tradition of mystery schools. *Arcana arcanissima* sets the style for his other domain of learning: the mythology of the Greeks and Romans, and of the Egyptians and other ancient peoples insofar as the Greeks and Romans were able to transmit it. This, too, Maier knew in minute detail. *Arcana arcanissima* is an interpretation of some of the principal myths and mythic cycles of antiquity: Isis and Osiris, the Voyage of the Argonauts, the Genealogy of the Gods and Goddesses, the Labors of Hercules, and the Trojan War. Maier believed that every one of them was invented to conceal the secrets of Chymia. This is a leitmotiv of his entire creative work, on which he insists to a degree that one might criticize as reductionist. He seems to have had little feeling for myth in itself; he treats the personalities of Hercules, Jason, and so on, merely as vehicles for a hidden agenda. He takes myth after myth, shows or hints at its chemical interpretation—and there is an end to the matter. Hercules' conquest of the Nemean Lion, for example, is the process of reducing the Green Lion so that it bleeds red.<sup>39</sup> Whether that leaves one any the wiser or not, it effectively disposes of the incident. Anything golden, like apples or a fleece, symbolizes the Universal Medicine. Any cases of marriage, rape, or copulation are the conjunction of the solar and lunar elements of the alchemical work. That takes care of much of classical mythology!

Obviously Maier found inspiration in myths and spent much time brooding over them. He loved them, but not for themselves—not for the vision of a guiltless, sensuous, and pagan world that so charmed Renaissance artists and their patrons. Maier loved myths solely because they spoke to him of Chymia. By reading Chymia between their lines and into their symbols, he must have felt that he was making contact with the great

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39. *Arcana arcanissima*, p. 219.

alchemical tradition, which had concealed its secret knowledge in these enigmatic stories. It had begun in Egypt, under the patronage of Hermes Trismegistus; now it was flourishing once more in Germany. Maier was keenly conscious of being one of its principal bearers, with all the consequent privilege and responsibility before God.

The only one of the seven Liberal Arts that Maier does not prescribe as a preparation for Chymia is Music, but this was not out of ignorance. On the contrary: Maier was, as far as we know, the most musically gifted alchemist who ever lived. His musical masterpiece *Atalanta fugiens* is admittedly popular on account of its fifty illustrations; but its fifty fugues are no less remarkable, if less accessible to the bibliophile. That Maier knew music is no surprise: it was part of a Renaissance gentleman's education to be able to hold a part in a madrigal or to play the lute. That he could compose music is not extraordinary: so could his fellow Hermetists Simon Studion, Robert Fludd, and Moritz von Hessen. What is phenomenal is the kind of music he undertook to compose in *Atalanta fugiens*: fifty fugues in two canonical parts over a cantus firmus, which is one of the most challenging exercises in counterpoint.<sup>40</sup> Although he sometimes breaks the rules of his day—and it has to be said that he does so out of incompetence, not out of a Beethovenian urge to express himself—his patience and persistence in carrying out the project to its conclusion are awe-inspiring. Possibly Maier intended a musical setting for his late work, the *Cantilenae intellectuales de phoenice redivivo*, but was forced to leave them as “intellectual songs,” songs without music but still assigned to three imaginary voices.

Whether Maier had any graphic gift we do not know; but a keen visual sense led him to have nearly all of his works illustrated with emblematic engravings. This is what has made them so collectable. Stanislas Klossowski de Rola's book of alchemical emblems, *The Golden Game*,<sup>41</sup>

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40. In John Read, *Prelude to Chemistry* (London: G. Bell, 1936), pp. 281–289, there is an Appendix, “The Music in ‘Atalanta fugiens,’” by F. H. Sawyer, Lecturer in Music in the University of St. Andrews. Sawyer offers an amusing “fugue” of his own composition, but it is not on a cantus firmus, hence free from the most constricting element in Maier's chosen form. Out of curiosity, when transcribing *Atalanta fugiens* for the Phanes Press edition I composed one fugue at the interval of a sixth on Maier's cantus firmus. With a professional training in music theory and composition, it was still difficult, and the prospect of writing 49 more was absolutely daunting.

41. Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game. Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1988.

devotes about a third of its volume to illustrations from Maier's works. Very often Maier will begin a chapter with an emblem, then explain and elaborate on it in prose or verse. The emblem then serves as a memory-image for the chapter, which can be stored and recalled in a way not possible (for most people) with words alone. Several of his works are organized in a rhythmical way, with alternating emblems and commentaries. The *Viatorium* has emblems of the seven planets; *Septimana philosophica*, of the seven days; *Symbola aureae mensae*, of the twelve nations; *Atalanta fugiens* fifty emblems to go with the fifty fugues, epigrams, and commentaries. Altogether there are about a hundred emblems in his works. He surely had a large part in designing them before they were entrusted to Matthias Merian and other professional engravers.

All of Maier's works give a sense of orderliness, which in its extreme forms organizes the whole book into a grid-like pattern. The Phoenix songs (*Cantilenae intellectuales de phoenice redivivo*) are a simple example: nine songs, each song containing three poems of identical length. *Atalanta fugiens* is a more complex pattern. It is based on approaching each topic in four distinct ways: visually, poetically, musically, and through erudition. Each topic takes up four pages, or two openings of the book. The first opening presents a visual element in the engraving, a poetic one in the six-line Latin epigram with its German translation, and a musical one in the setting of the epigram for three voices. The second opening contains two pages of commentary on the emblem. This pattern is repeated without variation fifty times.

The most elaborate grid occurs in *Symbola aureae mensae*, where there are twelve repetitions of the pattern, each consisting of the following elements: an imaginary portrait of an alchemist with a saying attributed to him or her, and some emblematic representation of the saying in the background; a history of alchemy in his or her nation; sayings from the alchemists of that national school; objections to alchemy; answers to those objections. But the twelvefold repetition of the pattern is not all. Just as in the comedies of Maier's time there would be interludes between the acts that were not part of the drama, *Symbola aureae mensae* contains digressions that distract one from the otherwise too predictable rhythm and the high seriousness of the writing. The German chapter contains a miniature pattern within the larger one: nine poems in different Latin meters about the nine Muses, addressed to the Rosicrucians. This exemplifies Maier's love of completeness—all nine Muses are there—and his love of writing

verse. The chapter on French alchemy has a digression that lists the annual tributes paid to the Gallican Church, including cows, sheep, pigs, and one million eggs. The chapter on Italy has a similar statistical exposé of the enormous revenues of the Pope. The chapter on English alchemy, as mentioned above, digresses to tell of Maier's experiences in England.

Maier must have begun work on his books by dividing the subject into an arithmologically significant number of sub-themes, such as 7, 9, 12, 50. The result is crystalline in its regularity and in the way it permits reflection on the subject from a number of different facets. He must then have worked systematically to fill out the appointed scheme. The process closely resembles the composition of music in the fixed forms that were evidently found so satisfying in Maier's time: variations on a melody; ground basses (including chaconne and passacaglia); measured dances such as the Pavane and Galliard with varied repeats. Given this habit of work, it is less amazing that he would write fifty fugues of identical length.

His mind itself must have been unusually orderly. The grid-like organization of his works suggests that he was familiar with the Art of Memory, in which a regular geometric or architectural pattern, stored in the imagination, is filled with diverse images, which facilitate the retrieval of memorized material. The images may be complex and are habitually bizarre: they serve as emblems from which a whole cluster of associated ideas can be drawn out. In the same way, the emblems of Maier's books encapsulate the sense of the whole.

All of the above adds up to one of the most universal minds of the time. His work embraces the whole cosmic hierarchy, from the heavenly bodies (in the *Viatorium*) to the bowels of the earth and its elements. In the dimension of time, he surveys the whole of civilization, but viewed as sacred history. It is the secret tradition of the mystery schools, interwoven with the Christian revelation, that endows chronology with value in his eyes. "Survey," however, gives a false sense of superficiality, whereas everywhere Maier looks it is into the depths that are accessible to him, thanks to Chymia. Everywhere he penetrates to inner meanings and their secret transmission. As if this were not enough, Maier seems to have been a man of unimpeachable morality, a paragon of courtly virtue and of total dedication to his philanthropic mission.

Maier's Chymia was not just a symbolic system of Christian mysticism, nor was it just a Jungian quest for the integration of the psyche. It entailed

dirty work: practical, laboratory alchemy, in the course of which very remarkable things occurred. There is no point in trying to write about it if one lacks such experience. This lack prevents virtually all scholars, including myself, from ever comprehending the most important thing in Maier's life. That which is deepest in him is inaccessible to us, and will always remain so.

Yet Maier cannot have expected all his readers to set up laboratories and devote themselves to the quest for the Universal Medicine. What he offers to the uninitiated reader is already rich and deep enough to justify Frances Yates's sobriquet in the spirit of normal, non-occult discourse. He reveals a world of curious imagery that haunts the imagination; a world that, despite appearances, is measured, numbered, and ordered, as if imprinted by the intelligence of the Creator; a world where the classical gods and goddesses are still alive, informing the metals and other substances and opening them to strange adventures; a world of freaks and wonders, frauds, crimes, sicknesses, and their remedy, which is still loved by God; a world of hope, as the never-extinguished torch of the wise burns again in the hands of the Brethren of the Rose-Cross.



Emblema XXVI, "*The Fruit of Human Wisdom is the Tree of Life*"  
Michael Maier, *Atalanta fugiens*, 1618.



5.

*Tycho Brahe,  
Johannes Kepler,  
Rudolf II*

*and the Prague Hermetic Renaissance*

ROBERT POWELL







IN THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE, the names of Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler stand out as pioneers of the modern heliocentric conception of the world. What is not generally realized is that they were both steeped in the hermetic tradition extending back to the legendary Hermes Trismegistus, who signified for ancient Egypt what Moses did for the people of Israel. Hermes taught that the law of correspondences, “as above, so below,” underlies all things. Summoned to Prague by Rudolf II, the two astronomers saw the emperor as a benefactor of their hermetic undertaking to discover the “divine laws” underlying the movement of the heavenly bodies. Their central role in the Prague hermetic renaissance of the sixteenth century needs to be recognized and honored.

It is a privilege to be here at such a gathering in this beautiful city of Prague. I think this is an extraordinary event—that so many people interested in the hermetic tradition have come together—and probably there have not been many gatherings like this since the days of ancient Egypt. During the course of our time together at this conference perhaps it will become clear, looking back to the hermetic renaissance that took place in Prague about four hundred years ago, that also now in our time there is a hermetic renaissance taking place, and that this is something of significance for the future, something that is meaningful in terms of world evolution.

In speaking of hermeticism, we are referring to a current—a spiritual stream—that we can trace back to the great teacher, Hermes Trismegistus, who some say lived about 2,400 years before Christ. Hermes taught aspects of the Egyptian religion, with its various practices and rites, and the deeper significance of the hieroglyphs and all that constituted this wonderful culture of ancient Egypt. His teaching we can look upon as being part of the spiritual tradition of humanity, as the cornerstone of what is called the Western mystery tradition. Central to the teaching of Hermes Trismegistus

("thrice greatest Hermes") is the idea of correspondences summarized in the formula "as above, so below." This mode of thinking in terms of analogy between the heavens above and the earth below was the prevalent form of thinking in antiquity up to the time of Plato and beyond. Plato spoke about the world of ideas reflected in the world of appearances, the world we see around us, and with the Neoplatonists—such as Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus—we find this same world outlook of correspondences between celestial and earthly realms. In our time, through the work of Carl Gustav Jung and his reference to archetypes, we can see an example of a reemergence of this mode of thinking in correspondences.

The period of the Prague hermetic renaissance four hundred years ago is of crucial significance because this was exactly the time when a transition occurred from the ancient and medieval form of thinking—a thinking in terms of relationships and correspondences between heaven and earth—to the analytic mode of thought of modern science. To use a term coined by at least one science historian, the year 1600 was the "watershed"—the time of transition. If we look at the two astronomers—Tycho Brahe, the Danish astronomer, and Johannes Kepler, the German astronomer and mathematician—who were summoned to Prague by Emperor Rudolf II, then we can see clearly, in the case of this particular constellation of personalities, the dramatic transition in human consciousness that took place at that point in time: the transition from the ancient way of thinking exemplified by hermeticism to the modern scientific analytic mode of thought that arose around that time, which has been the basis of Western civilization for the last four hundred years. This mode of thought, however, is obviously reaching a critical point in view of the tremendous problems now arising through its application, leading to a disturbance of balance in the environment and to enormous challenges confronting the whole of humanity. In view of the crisis stemming from the extreme predominance of scientific thought in the West, it is time to look again at our heritage—to turn to the great heritage of Western civilization extending back to Hermes, the founder of the hermetic tradition. And judging from the signs, of which this conference is one example, there is a renaissance of the hermetic tradition taking place in the twentieth century. All the signs indicate that it will be increasingly significant as time goes on.

Now I would like to focus upon the Prague hermetic renaissance four hundred years ago. Going back four hundred years from the year chosen

for this exhibition of the period of Rudolf II here in Prague (our conference is taking place in association with the exhibition) we come to the year 1597. The year 1597 was very important in the lives of the two astronomers. For Tycho Brahe, it was the year when he left the island of Hveen, the magical island about fourteen miles from Copenhagen. Hveen or Ven now belongs to Sweden, but it belonged to Denmark at that time, and Tycho Brahe spent just over twenty years there observing the heavens, gathering the most impressive range of observations of the stars and of the movements of the planets that humanity had known up to that point. Kepler called Brahe the "phoenix" of the new astronomy. Tycho Brahe provided the material with which Kepler was able to find the mathematical-astronomical laws underlying the new heliocentric astronomy that supplanted the previous geocentric astronomical view. The idea of a heliocentric ("Sun-centered") solar system had been put forward by Copernicus in 1543 in place of the former geocentric ("Earth-centered") viewpoint.

Also important in Kepler's life was the year 1597, which saw the publication of his first work, the *Mysterium Cosmographicum*, which contained his ideas about the structure of the solar system. It had been an overwhelming experience two years earlier that led him to write this work. After thinking and reflecting very intensely for many months on why there were only six planets orbiting the Sun, Kepler, as a convinced disciple of Copernicus, began to question why God had created the universe with this particular structure. Then it came to him in a flash that there are only five Platonic solids—that is, five perfectly symmetrical solids—and these, as he saw in an instant, could be fitted between the orbits of the six planets. The cube could fit between the orbit of Saturn and Jupiter; the tetrahedron, or pyramid, between the orbit of Jupiter and Mars; the dodecahedron between the orbit of Mars and Earth; the icosahedron (which is a twenty-sided triangular structure) between the orbit of the Earth and Venus; and the octahedron between the orbit of Venus and Mercury. With this he thought he had discovered the secret of existence, and he communicated his discovery in the work *Mysterium Cosmographicum*, which is full of mystical ideas about the structure of the universe. In a scientific sense, this work would be regarded today as the speculations of a dreamer, having nothing to do with reality. Yet for Kepler this was the seed for all his later astronomical work; he followed it up and pursued it to discover the actual orbits of the planets, which he wanted to demonstrate would fit into this structure.

It was a significant moment in time four hundred years ago, when the *Mysterium Cosmographicum* was published. Copies were sent out to different scholars and astronomers in Europe. Tycho Brahe was one of those who received a copy of this work, and he immediately recognized that here was something very significant.

At this moment in time four hundred years ago, young Kepler was filled with Pythagorean ideas. Indeed, his life and work reflect something of a renaissance of Pythagorean thinking, in turn—as we shall see—linked with the hermetic tradition. In fact, Kepler himself (when he was engaged in all kinds of difficult calculations) wrote, “Should the calculation somewhere not come out right, then Pythagoras ought to rise again to instruct me. But he does not come, unless his soul has migrated into mine.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, Kepler felt himself very linked with Pythagoras and the tradition and way of thinking of the Pythagoreans. In his ingenious idea of fitting the Platonic solids into the orbits of the planets around the Sun, we see something that can be called a new or neo-Pythagorean inspiration.

Pythagoras, of course, is someone who can be looked upon as a bearer of the hermetic tradition. He was initiated into the Egyptian mysteries, where he received something of the content of the mysteries of Hermes. Pythagoras is an important figure for the transmission of ancient mystery wisdom, including the hermetic tradition, and he was sometimes referred to as a *son of Hermes*. This designation indicates that Pythagoras was steeped in the teaching of Hermes.

Returning to Hermes, he is one of those individuals who can be called a great initiate. He was an individual of the spiritual stature of Moses, who taught the people of Israel and gave them the content of their religion. Hermes himself, going back still further in time, was a pupil of Zarathustra, the founder of the Zoroastrian religion. In looking at these great teachers of humanity, we are looking at a chain of spiritual teaching flowing down through the ages. Often these teachers were the founders of the great religions. Following the chain further back from Zarathustra, Zarathustra himself was a pupil of the great Manu, who is referred to in the Bible as Noah.

Manu is one of the highest teachers of humanity, having the responsibility for overseeing all the phases of evolution since the destruction of Atlantis, an event referred to by Plato. Noah or Manu was the initiate who led a

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1. Max Caspar, *Kepler*, trans. C. Doris Hellman. London/New York, 1959, p. 96.

small group of people out from Atlantis before its destruction, across to the Gobi Desert region, and founded a mystery school there. This mystery school was the source for all later civilization, starting with the ancient Indian civilization (reflected in the Vedas) founded by the seven holy rishis (who were pupils of Manu) and followed by the Persian culture founded by Zarathustra, the teacher of the Persian civilization. This, in turn, was followed by the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Hebrew civilizations, which received their cultural impulses from Hermes, Moses, and others.

The key significance of Manu (Noah) is evident when we see him in relationship to his sons. Noah had three sons: Japhet, Shem, and Cham (or Ham), and these three sons of Noah were bearers of important spiritual streams relevant to the hermetic tradition. Cham is viewed as the father of alchemy and is associated with Africa. Shem is the father of the Semitic tradition—the mysteries of this tradition being known as the Cabala. These are the mysteries of sound, language, and number. Japhet, the third son of Noah, is associated with the relationships between heaven and earth as these come to expression in what later came to be called astrology.

Hermes was the recipient of the mystery stream going back to Noah and his sons. This is helpful in order to understand the branches of the Western mystery tradition called hermeticism. The three principal branches of the Western mystery stream going back to Hermes are astrology, Cabala, and alchemy. I know that the focus of this conference is on alchemy, but I am sure there are many here who are interested in these two other branches of the hermetic tradition as well. These three branches belong to the “tree” of hermeticism.

Hermeticism itself encompasses the theoretical aspect, which is an understanding of the multiple relationships between the macrocosm and the microcosm. The practical side of the teachings of Hermes are summarized under the word *magic*. Magic is the “technology,” so to speak, of hermeticism, just as technology is the practical application of present-day science.

Against this background, we can look at the three individuals who came together here four hundred years ago—Brahe, Kepler, and Rudolf II. Emperor Rudolf II was, as most historians acknowledge, a very strange person. He had an enormous collection of books on magic, which was rather unusual for someone in his position as Holy Roman Emperor. One can well understand that there was some concern about his strange pursuits. He was supposed to be responsible for the whole realm of the empire, and as far as those around him—especially his advisers—were concerned, he

neglected his official duties for the pursuit of all kinds of (for them) unintelligible matters. Thus, the archdukes of Vienna wrote in 1606:

His Majesty is interested only in wizards, alchemists, Cabalists, and the like, sparing no expense to find all kinds of treasures, learn secrets, and use scandalous ways of harming his enemies. He strives all the time to eliminate God completely, so that he may, in the future, serve a different master.<sup>2</sup>

Evidently Rudolf was something of an anomaly for his time, as Holy Roman Emperor. Occupying this key position, he was at the same time a person who was imbued with the spirit of the hermetic tradition, who was interested in magic and was willing to support the numerous alchemists who came to his court in Prague. He came to be looked upon as a kind of new "Hermes Trismegistus," a new king and a patron of the occult sciences.

Rudolf became emperor in 1576 at the time of the death of his father, Maximilian II. Undoubtedly his greatest achievement was to relocate the center of the empire from Vienna to Prague in the period from 1576 to 1583. This was an enormous undertaking. Through this step he put Prague back on the map, returning it to the consciousness of Europe at that time. Prague became the heart of Europe. In a geographical sense, Prague does lie close to the heart of Europe. It may well have been this consideration that motivated Rudolf to shift the center of the empire here. In my view there was a true inspiration at work, since this whole area is conducive to a heart quality of consciousness. Rudolf II thus followed in the footsteps of his predecessor, Emperor Charles IV, who has been described as "the last initiate emperor on the throne of Europe,"<sup>3</sup> and who also made Prague the center of the empire. Charles IV is famous for his construction of the castle Karlstein, about half an hour's drive from Prague, which he intended as a "castle of the Grail"—a truly extraordinary work that Charles IV used as his private retreat and meditation center, because the nature of this area was conducive to "heart consciousness."

Rudolf II followed in the footsteps of Charles IV, again making Prague the center of the empire. Through this he helped another kind of thinking,

2. Robert John Weston Evans, *Rudolf II and his world*. Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 196.

3. Rudolf Steiner, quoted by Paul M. Allen in *A Christian Rosenkruetz Anthology*. Blauvelt, NY: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1974, p. 467.

the hermetic form of thought, to flourish here. Hermeticism is not just an intellectual pursuit; it is a matter of the heart. If we contrast the hermetic form of consciousness with modern scientific consciousness, it is apparent that modern scientific consciousness is not engaged with the *whole* human being; it is an intellectual way of approaching the world and its application—through technology—engages the will. The hermetic approach, however, embraces the whole human being in terms of our head (thinking) consciousness, our heart, and our will. In fact, the three branches of hermeticism to which I have referred—astrology, Cabala, and alchemy—may be seen in relation to these three different levels.

Astrology is related more to the head, which strives to grasp the heavenly world. Alchemy is concerned with the mysteries of matter, the spiritual forces underlying matter, and is connected especially with the bodily aspect of nature (including human nature). Think of the digestion of food, for example; this is an alchemical process that takes place within us all the time. To use the language of Hermes from the *Hermetica*, the writings attributed to him, astrology looks up to the mysteries of the heavens, to the Divine Father, whereas alchemy is concerned with the mysteries of the Divine Mother, to use the Gnostic term for the mysteries of Mother Earth. Between the Divine Father in the heights and the Divine Mother in the depths, weave the Son and Daughter—the “holy king” and “queen” of the Cabala—corresponding to the Logos and Sophia, the Creative Word and Divine Wisdom, whose mysteries are the focus of attention in the Cabala and who relate more to the level of the heart. Thinking in terms of the correspondence between the great world and the human being, in the great world the mysteries of the Father are revealed in the heavens in the movements of the planets, and it was these mysteries with which Kepler was concerned. Juxtaposed thereto are the mysteries of alchemy, the mysteries of the transformation of matter, which are the mysteries of the Divine Mother. It was these mysteries with which Rudolf II was primarily concerned.

Tycho Brahe was both an astronomer and an alchemist, so he bridged these two realms. In the books found in Tycho Brahe’s library there are usually two vignettes; one depicts a man leaning against a globe, holding an astrolabe, and looking up to the heavens. This was the one direction of Brahe’s interest—toward the heavens. The other vignette depicts a man who has the alchemical apparatus alongside him and is holding medicinal herbs and plants in his hand; moreover, he has the snake of Aesculapius



winding up his arm, and he is looking down to understand, grasp, and penetrate the mysteries of matter.

Brahe looked up to the heavens and also looked down to the earthly realm. To give a little background about him, he was born into a wealthy aristocratic family in Denmark and at the age of thirteen was sent to Copenhagen to study law and rhetoric at the university. At the age of thirteen, while in Copenhagen, he saw an eclipse of the Sun. This had a profound impact on him, for he realized that such phenomena can be predicted. From that moment he started to take an intense interest in the phenomena of the heavens. He bought the works of Ptolemy, the great Greek astronomer, and began to study everything he could about astronomy. Then, at the age of sixteen, he had another astronomical experience when he was looking up to the night sky. It was the summer of 1563, and there was a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Leo. Brahe was following the movements of these two planets and saw when they actually came together. To his consternation, when he consulted the astronomical tables—the Alphonsine tables based on Ptolemy's geocentric system—the date given for the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn was a whole month in error. This really shocked Brahe. There also existed tables based on Copernicus's astronomical system, and he found that the prediction for the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn based on Copernicus's tables was also several days off.

This experience of the tables being wrong—that they failed to provide the actual dates of the astronomical phenomena as they appeared in the heavens—was for Brahe the central impulse to begin actual, exact observations. At that time astrology was still very popular, and Brahe also wrote various astrological treatises. This brought him to the attention of King Frederick II of Denmark. King Frederick recognized Brahe's genius and offered him the island of Hveen and a considerable sum of money so that he could go to Hveen and begin his project for the renewal of astronomy—to begin collecting exact observations.

In 1576, Brahe was in his thirtieth year of life, and he went to Hveen and laid the foundation stone for an observatory called the Uraniborg, an extraordinary place with astronomical instruments and also with alchemical apparatus in the cellar. Before going to Hveen in 1576, Brahe had learned the mysteries of alchemy from his uncle at Steen, in Denmark. One evening, after he had been working away in his uncle's alchemical laboratory and was walking back to his accommodation—it was the eleventh

of November in 1572—he looked up to the constellation of Cassiopeia and saw the familiar “W” of the Cassiopeia constellation. To his amazement he noticed slightly above the “W” an incredibly bright star. He thought perhaps it was an optical illusion, so he called his servant to verify it—it was in fact a star. This was the new star in the constellation of Cassiopeia in the year 1572—something completely unheard of. This astronomical nova is called Tycho’s Nova. He was not the first person to see it, but he wrote about it, and thus his name became associated with it. This was also a very important event in his life, because he realized that the appearance of a new star shattered the old Aristotelian way of looking at the universe. Aristotle had taught that beyond the Moon everything is immutable and unchangeable. The appearance of a new star in the heavens was something that contradicted Aristotle’s teaching. This was what Tycho Brahe wrote about, and it was this work that also helped bring him to the attention of King Frederick as well as many scholars around Europe.

It is remarkable that King Frederick made such an extraordinary offer of a whole island to Brahe. Moreover, he was given all the money he needed to build his observatory, the Uraniborg. There, in 1576, he began to make very exact astronomical observations, more exact than anyone had ever done. He had so many people working for him that he built a second observatory, the Stellarborg, where he set up astronomical instruments and installed alchemical apparatus in the cellar.

It is apparent that, on a deeper level, Brahe really stood in the stream of hermeticism—looking to the heavens above and trying to understand the relationship between the heavens and the earth and looking to the mysteries of matter—how the cosmos is reflected in the mysteries of matter, in alchemy. He also used his knowledge for healing purposes—for making medicines. In fact, his whole mode of thinking was hermetic through and through. Brahe wrote:

This I dare to affirm, without any shadow of doubt, that those who strive after the mysteries of medicine without a knowledge of the heavens can scarcely grasp half of what it is necessary to know in so far as they do not understand the connection between the microcosm and the macrocosm through analogy.<sup>4</sup>

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4. J. L. E. Dreyer, *Tycho Brahe*. Edinburgh, 1890, pp. 76–77.

This statement is a clear—albeit implicit—affirmation of hermeticism. We even find in the writings of Brahe an inkling of what was later put forward by Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843), the founder of homeopathy—that like cures like. Galen (A.D. 130?–200?), the ancient Greek medical doctor, formulated the principle of healing with opposites—the contrary against the opposite. In opposition, Brahe wrote:

Such illnesses have many qualities in common with sulfur and thus can be also cured through perfectly pure sulfur—especially if one prepares a distillation therefrom. Because like must be fought with like, and not as the Galeans maintain, that to cure with the contrary against the opposite is always the right way.<sup>5</sup>

Tycho Brahe was a multifaceted person who stood in the hermetic tradition, who sought to explore the mysteries of the heavens, and who tried to understand the mysteries of the transmutation of matter. After spending twenty years on the island of Hveen, he had to leave because King Frederick II's son, Christian IV, decided to stop the financial support. Brahe was no longer able to maintain his "kingdom," which he had built up on the island of Hveen, and he set off in 1597 on a trek to find his next post of destination. He arrived in Prague and was welcomed by Rudolf II, who offered him a castle of his choice and a grand salary for that time—three thousand gold florins a year. If we remember that Kepler, who was teaching mathematics in Graz, Austria, received two hundred florins a year, we can see what a generous offer Rudolf II made to Brahe.

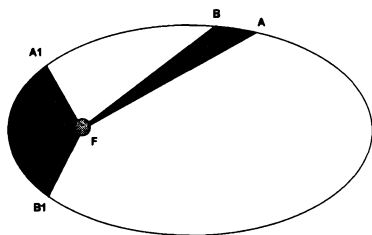
Brahe opted for Castle Benatek, about twenty miles northeast of Prague. He went there with his whole entourage and some of his astronomical instruments, intending to continue his astronomical observations there. But he realized that the time had come when he needed someone who could decipher these observations. He needed a mathematical genius who would be able to penetrate through to understand the data he had collected. He knew intuitively that Kepler was the mathematician who could do this. This is an example of one of the great mysteries of world destiny—that Kepler recognized Brahe, and Brahe recognized Kepler. The two had to come together—Brahe as the great observer and Kepler as the great thinker and

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5. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

mathematician who would be the one able to decipher the data that Tycho Brahe had collected through his twenty years of astronomical observation. It was a high point of destiny—a culminating point—when in 1600, Kepler came to Prague and met Brahe, and they began their collaboration.

Kepler worked very intently here for several years, and eventually his great book on his research into the laws of astronomy—*Astronomia Nova*—was published in Prague in 1609, dedicated to Emperor Rudolf II. This was a book that changed the course of the history of science and the whole of astronomy. For the first time in the history of astronomy the idea was put forward that the planets do not move in perfect circles, as Plato had said they must. Kepler's first law of his three planetary laws, that the planets move in ellipses around the Sun, revised once and for all this Platonic astronomical idea. In addition, *Astronomia Nova* made known Kepler's discovery of the second law—that each planet sweeps out an equal area in the same period of time. This work, published in Prague in 1609, was the starting point for the new astronomy: heliocentric astronomy based on exact mathematical laws. Eleven years later, Kepler's third law was published, relating the cube of the distances of the planets to the square of their orbital periods.



Schematic representation of Kepler's second law. Areas A,B,F and A1,B1,F are equal and are "swept" out in equal intervals of time by a planet in its orbit around the Sun (F).

A careful study of his writing indicates that Kepler arrived at these three laws through intuition. As he describes, they just popped into his mind. These three laws scattered through his enormous literary work (some twenty volumes of neo-Pythagorean, hermetic, and mystical thinking) represent a crystallization of scientific thought distilled from the fullness of ideas—many of a hermetic nature—that permeated Kepler's whole consciousness. The three laws discovered by Kepler were taken by Isaac

Newton in conjunction with Galileo's ideas on gravity, and thus he constructed his mechanical world system. This view basically remains the prevailing astronomical conception of the solar system—modified, of course, by Einstein through his theory of relativity.

In Prague, just less than four hundred years ago, it was a significant moment when the new heliocentric astronomy of Copernicus was given a mathematical foundation, for it is significant that alongside his scientific discourses the hermetic thinking of Kepler comes through over and over again in his writing. For example, he wrote in 1604:

I may say with truth that whenever I consider in my thoughts the beautiful order, how one thing issues out of and is derived from another, then it is as though I had read a divine text, written into the world itself, not with letters but rather, with essential objects, saying, "Man, stretch thy reason hither, so that thou mayest comprehend these things."<sup>6</sup>

Kepler was aware of an Egyptian heritage in the background of his research, which he expressed in the introduction to his work *Harmonice Mundi* (*The Harmony of the World*), published in 1619.<sup>7</sup> He wrote that he had stolen the golden vessels—the sacred vessels—of the Egyptians. It seems that he was aware that he was bringing something through in our time that was known in a different way to the ancient Egyptians. And there is some evidence in the *Hermetica* attributed to Hermes Trismegistus that the Egyptians knew of the Sun-centered universe. In the *Corpus Hermeticum*—the collection of writings written down in Greek but attributed to Hermes—we find this statement, where Hermes Trismegistus speaks: "The Sun is stationed in the midst and wears the cosmos as a wreath around him. And so he lets the cosmos go on its course not leaving it far separated from himself, but to speak truly, keeping it joined to himself."<sup>8</sup>

Here we find the idea of a Sun-centered cosmos, which, of course, is something we take for granted now. But when Copernicus published his heliocentric (Sun-centered) system in 1543, it seemed absurd to most

6. Kepler in his diary for the year 1604, quoted by Max Caspar, *op. cit.*

7. Johannes Kepler, *The Harmony of the World*, translated by E. J. Aiton, A. M. Duncan, and J. V. Field, Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997.

8. *Hermetica*, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

people. In the manuscript written by Copernicus, he alludes to Hermes; it is probable that, through the *Corpus Hermeticum* or some other source, Copernicus supposed that the heliocentric system had been known of in the days of ancient Egypt. Kepler saw himself as a prophet of Copernicus—he was the first astronomer to declare publicly that the Copernican way of looking at the world was correct. This was a major point of difference between Kepler and Brahe. Tycho Brahe maintained that the Earth was at the center of the cosmos, that the Moon and the Sun revolve around the Earth, and that the planets revolve around the Sun. At first sight this is a rather strange idea, a mixed geocentric–heliocentric solar system.

I have explored this idea in my *Hermetic Astrology* trilogy and found that, for a new astrology, the “Tychonic” system is, in fact, excellent.<sup>9</sup> On his deathbed—he died here in Prague on October 24, 1601—Brahe repeated again and again the words “Let me not have lived in vain.”<sup>10</sup> He was hoping that Kepler would base his research on Brahe’s system, but Kepler didn’t. Kepler believed in and went on to offer convincing proof of the Copernican view of the world, which is what we use now. Nevertheless, from an astrological point of view, there is a very deep and profound meaning to Brahe’s astronomical system. I believe that his system is essentially the same as what provided a basis for the true hermetic astrology of the ancient Egyptians, but it would lead too far to go into this subject now if we are to have time for questions.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Question:* I’m extremely impressed with what you said about the Pythagorean connection to the ancient Egyptian teachings, and I have two questions concerning the heritage of Pythagorean writings. Do the sources indicate anyone in the fifteenth century Italian Renaissance or in the Northern Renaissance of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries about whom we know that he or she was familiar with Pythagorean writings? The second question is, does Frances Yates indicate that Giordano Bruno—who was familiar with Egyptian traditions (but I don’t know to what extent)—knew the writing of Pythagoras? Or did Giordano Bruno gain his Egyptian knowledge from other sources?

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9. See bibliography.

10. J. L. E. Dreyer, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

*Answer:* This is a very interesting question. Personally, I don't know of any external sources, but I think that in the case of individuals such as Giordano Bruno, Johannes Kepler, Tycho Brahe, and Rudolf II, it is a matter of reincarnation—that they were individuals who were connected in some way in earlier lives with ancient Egyptian mysteries. There is some evidence, at least in the case of Kepler, that he had some kind of reminiscence of ancient Egypt, as comes to expression in his reference to “the golden vessels of the Egyptians.” It was probably something similar in the case of Giordano Bruno. I would say it is the same with many occult motifs we find in the Western mystery tradition. If we cannot find an actual extant tradition, it is generally a matter of a reemergence or resurrection or renaissance of esoteric ideas from the past. One way of explaining this is that it is we ourselves who reincarnate from culture to culture and that we bring the ideas with us each time in a new form. I would see this as an explanation in the case of Giordano Bruno. And this, essentially, would explain the Prague hermetic renaissance at the time of Brahe, Kepler, and Rudolf II, that these individuals and others connected with them experienced a resurrection of the Egyptian culture represented by the hermetic tradition.

*Question:* I was wondering if you had looked at and, if so, would comment on the long-running argument between Johannes Kepler and Robert Fludd?

*Answer:* This points again to the threshold, the watershed, in consciousness at that time between the ancient mode of thinking—the hermetic mode of thinking—and the modern scientific mode of thinking. Although Kepler's whole writing portrays a neo-Pythagorean mode of thought, Kepler thought of himself as a scientist through and through, whereas Fludd represented the hermetic standpoint. This was the source of conflict between them. I think it was an unnecessary conflict, because in Kepler's way of thinking you can find an abundant number hermetic elements, as is also the case with Tycho Brahe and Rudolf II. Obviously, there is much more that could be said about this, and in the space of this lecture it has been possible to sketch only a brief outline. Yet I hope this can be a source of inspiration for further research into the Prague hermetic renaissance and the great hermetic tradition—with its three branches of astrology, Cabala, and alchemy—extending back to the time of Hermes.

6.

*The Twelfth  
Adept*

RAFAŁ T. PRINKE





Michael Sendivogius (1566–1636).



THE FIRST QUARTER of the seventeenth century was the turning point in the intellectual history of Europe. It was the time when religious and magical systems of earlier centuries reached their apogee and the world was anxiously awaiting an entirely new development. This millennial atmosphere that pervaded the inquisitive minds of the learned produced the ephemeral phenomenon known as Rosicrucianism. Ever since the publication of the two Rosicrucian manifestos—*Fama* (1614) and *Confessio* (1615)—there has been an unending debate on whether the Rosicrucian Order really existed as a formal organization. While this question may never be conclusively answered, it is now pretty certain that even if there had been a fraternal order with initiatory rituals, degrees, and teachings calling themselves “Orden des Rosenkreutzers” prior to the publication of the manifestos, it was of relatively little importance. It may even be said that its very inexistence or insignificance was responsible for its enormous success, creating increased interest and the atmosphere of secrecy through the failure to contact that elusive group of *adepti* by many “erudites of Europe” to whom the manifestos had been addressed. The symbolic meaning of the order’s name, which could not be fully rationalized, proved to be so enchanting that it was used by various occult and Freemasonic groups and is still around today.

The objective of many scholarly analyses of that phenomenon was to elucidate the authorship of the manifestos and membership of the fraternity. This effort produced several critical surveys of relevant publications from the period and other sources, but the results were inconclusive or debatable.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The most comprehensive accounts of early Rosicrucianism are: Arthur Edward Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, London, 1924; Hans Schick, *Das ältere Rosenkreuzertum*, Berlin, 1942; Will-Erich Peuckert, *Das Rosenkreuz*, Berlin, 1973 (and a 1928 version, *Die Rosenkreutzer*); Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London, 1972; and Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosy Cross Unveiled*, Wellingborough, 1980.

In order to give the research on Rosicrucianism a new perspective, Frances A. Yates suggested that the term could be applied to "a certain style of thinking which is historically recognizable without raising the question whether a Rosicrucian style of thinker belonged to a secret society."<sup>2</sup> In fact, the development of such an approach could already be seen in earlier studies and is now generally recognized as valid. Rosicrucians, in this sense, were therefore all those great minds of the early seventeenth century who were steeped in the earlier hermetic tradition and at the same time sensed the need for the future experimental method, believed in the need for secrecy in alchemical studies and yet understood the importance of exchange of one's findings with others, accepted the rules of the feudal society and still hoped for a new utopian reformation. They were typically Paracelsian physicians and alchemists trying to reconcile the spiritual and material aspects of their science, the unity of which had already been undermined by the Renaissance, and also prolific writers of books that veiled more than they revealed.

Many of the most prominent figures usually associated with that milieu were for at least some time living in Prague, which had, under the rule of Emperor Rudolf II, become a Mecca for alchemists and Rosicrucian adventurers. They included Heinrich Khunrath (ca.1560–1605), the author of *Amphitheatrum sapientiae aeternae*, the first edition of which was published in Prague in 1598; John Dee (1527–1608) and Edward Kelley (1555–1597), well known for their "spirit actions," later published by Méric Casaubon; Martin Ruland (1532–1602), the author of *Lexicon alchymiae* (1571), and his son of the same name (1569–1611); Cornelis Drebbel (1572–1633), the Dutch inventor and alchemist; Oswald Croll (ca.1560–1609), the German physician and Paracelsian; and Michael Maier (ca.1568–1622), who is now especially remembered for his books illustrated with engravings of strange beauty, which attempted to explore the secrets of alchemy in series of emblems, often accompanied by allegories, poems, and even music—as in his *Atalanta fugiens* (1618). Maier served Rudolf II as his personal physician and after his death went to serve Moritz, landgrave of Hesse, in the same way. He traveled extensively around Europe, where he had many contacts at the courts of German princes, and also went to England, where he may have visited Robert Fludd, though the main purpose of his stay there was to learn English in order to translate Samuel Norton's

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2. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

*Ordinal of Alchemy* into Latin.<sup>3</sup> Michael Maier himself never pretended to be a member of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood but defended it fervently and even wrote down its laws in *Themis aurea* (1618)—behavior very typical of all the leading Rosicrucian authors.

Maier was also involved in the political aspect of Rosicrucianism through his contacts with James I and his presence at the wedding of the king's daughter with Frederick V, elector palatine of the Rhine (whose brief reign as the "Winter King of Bohemia" was the main theme of Frances A. Yates's absorbing but controversial book *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*).<sup>4</sup> Consequently, it is no surprise that many modern authors see him as "the architect of the Rosicrucian Movement."<sup>5</sup> Yates herself suggested that "the traditions of the court of Rudolf II in Prague were expanding into the Palatinate through Maier and his work."<sup>6</sup> In her view, these traditions stemmed originally from the influence of John Dee, who visited Bohemia in 1585–1588, but it seems that it was very much overestimated.<sup>7</sup> Maier, at least, did not come to Prague before the late 1590s and thus could not have met Dee there, whereas his visit to England took place several years after Dee's death. Therefore, even if Frances A. Yates was partly right about the role John Dee played in initiating the Rosicrucian Movement, there must have been some intermediary figure who passed on the torch.

Maier's major work—*Symbola aureae mensae* (1617)—presents the twelve greatest adepts of twelve nations, most of whom are traditionally included in the alchemical areopagus:

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Hermes the Egyptian        | 7. Arnoldus of Villanova the Gall  |
| 2. Mary the Hebrew            | 8. Thomas Aquinas the Italian      |
| 3. Democritus the Greek       | 9. Raimundus Lullius the Spaniard  |
| 4. Morienus the Roman         | 10. Roger Bacon the English        |
| 5. Avicenna the Arab          | 11. Melchior of Cibi the Hungarian |
| 6. Albertus Magnus the German | 12. Anonymous the Sarmatian        |

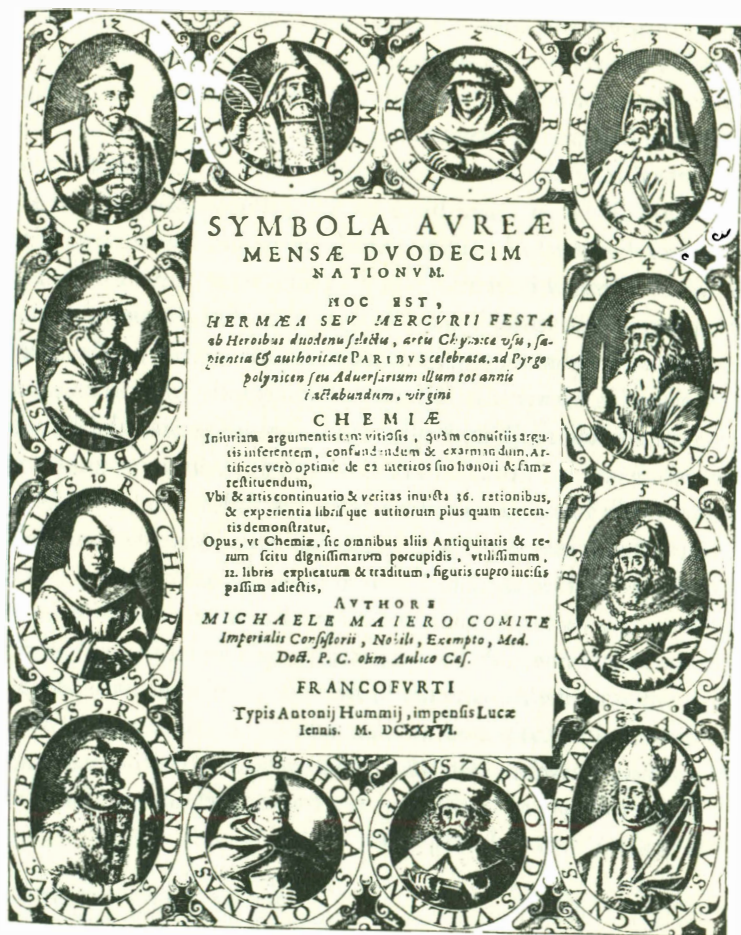
3. Ron Heisler, "Michael Maier and England," *Hermetic Journal*, 1989. Electronic version available at Adam McLean's *The alchemy web site and virtual library* ([http://www.levity.com/alchemy/h\\_maier.html](http://www.levity.com/alchemy/h_maier.html)).

4. Adam McLean, "A Rosicrucian Manuscript of Michael Maier," *The Hermetic Journal* 5 (autumn 1979); and Heisler, *op. cit.*

5. Adam McLean, Introduction to *Hermetic Garden of Daniel Stolcius*, trans. Patricia Tahil, *Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks* No. 5, Edinburgh 1980.

6. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

7. Robert G. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg monarchy*, Oxford, 1979, p. 355.



Title page of Michael Maier's *Symbola aureae mensae* with the portrait of "Anonymus Sarmata" in the top left corner.

The engraved title page shows twelve medallions with portraits of the *adepti*, and there are also emblematic engravings presenting their teachings at the beginning of every part of the book. The most intriguing is obviously the last one, because he is not named. Sarmatia was the seventeenth-century name for Poland, whose nobility was then believed to be descendants of the ancient Sarmatian tribes. The term was widely used at the time, and even now *Sarmatism* is the name for certain typically Polish trends in Baroque literature and painting. Moreover, the anonymous adept is depicted—both on the title page and on the emblematic



figure—in the traditional dress of the Polish nobility, so there is no doubt about his nationality. But Maier gives some additional clues: on page 555 of *Symbola aureae mensae*, just below the illustration of the Twelfth Adept, he says:



Symbolic engraving depicting “Anonymus Sarmata” and his teachings (from Michael Maier’s *Symbola aureae mensae*).

*I must bear testimony to Heliocantharus Borealis [Glorifier of the Northern Sun], whose tincture of admirable potency I have seen myself—with my own eyes—projected on diverse metals, and all of them were converted into gold.*

And in a gloss on the margin next to the quoted passage, there is a further veiled remark:

M.S.

Os. Cr.

Heliocan-  
tharus Bo-  
realis à  
Crollio di-  
ctus.

The initials *M.S.* must be those of the adept's real name, while *Os. Cr.* and *Crollio* clearly refer to Oswald Croll, who lived in Prague from 1593 until his death in 1609 and thus must have been known personally to Maier. Frances Yates points out that Andrea Libavius (ca.1560–1616), in his attack on Rosicrucians, makes Croll the most prominent representative of this current of thought. On the other hand, two major books written by Croll were dedicated to Christian, duke of Anhalt, "the master mind behind the Palatinate policy," and Peter Vok of Rožmberk, whose brother had been John Dee's patron in Bohemia.<sup>8</sup> Yates concludes that "Libavius might therefore be suggesting that the [Rosicrucian] manifestos belonged in an atmosphere congenial to Anhalt, an atmosphere in which influences from John Dee mingled with those of Croll."<sup>9</sup> And yet it was not Croll whom Maier made the greatest adept of his time, but one whom Croll called "Heliocantharus Borealis."

Following Maier's clue, we find that Oswald Croll, on page 94 of the preface to his celebrated *Basilica chymica* (1609), describes in a flowery and veiled style how he was "fortunate to witness with his own eyes what had been refused to others" and how he was shown various "metamorphoses of Inferior Astronomy" (alchemical transmutations) and other natural miracles by a man of great learning—Heliocantharus Borealis. His true name is not revealed—but looking at the original text, one is intrigued by several capital letters inside words that look like a cryptic message. Indeed, when read by themselves, they spell out the name of the adept so admired by Maier and Croll: "MICHAEL SENDIVOIUS." It is the name of the Polish alchemist Michał Sędziwój (1566–1636), better known under his Latinized name Michael Sendivogius. It is interesting that in Croll's cryptogram the *G* is missing, which indicates that he Latinized the Czech version of the name—Michal Sendivoj—by which he knew him in Prague.

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8. Frances Yates. *op. cit.*, p. 16.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Num. cap. 11.  
e. 31.  
Ps. 78. sect. 31.  
Ps. 104. 105.  
Tob. 12. sect. 7.

Basiliscus  
Philosophicus  
instat Fulguris  
repente & ex  
improviso co-  
burit quodcu-  
que metallum  
imperfectum,  
& subito aliam  
formam novā  
producit.  
Merito igitur  
Indagatio illi-  
us omnib. Ve-  
ritatis studiose  
deberet esse  
commendati-  
ssima.

& recordatione saltem consoletur. Quid, cui, quando, & quantum, novit ipse Deus, cujus Nomen glorificetur, & in Aeternum sit benedictum: qui sapē bonus avertit, poterant quæ forte nocere: nec vitam illorum miseram expetendam esse reor, quibus felicitas damno cessit & nocumentum inde suscepit, unde beneficium debant reportare: & qui summa in fortuna, ubi jam felicitatem illis Fatorum indulgentia majorem tribuere vix ullam potuisset, propter compedes injectas fortunam desiderant: & quibus Deus quædam largitur ad penam iratus, quæ beneficii loco negare solet propitius. Attamen cum opera DEI sint annuncianda, & celebranda, & ut hoc monumento relicto constet olim, nostri quoque, sæculi hominibus felicitatem suam posteris non invidentibus Beneficentiam illam Divinam non fuisse negatam, in Veritatis atestationem & subsidium, non possum hoc loco non meminisse singularis illius Divinae erga me Clementia, quod mihi non sine manifesto superis favore ceu oculato testi, in peregrinationib. meis isthac fortuna, compluribus expetentib. denegata, contigerit, ut illam insueri & gustare licuerit, apud Magnum aliquem, cui in æternum benē sis, & Cumprimis egregium Helios Antharum bor Ea Lem, nunc in Christo quiescentem: cuius Smo di LENtis Denique consue Verunt latitare temporum curricula. Unde diu maximo Natura per artem miraculo cum stupore attonitus, intervarias & multiplices Inferioris Astronomiæ metamorphoses (via Antiquorum Humida nondum tamen intēse ad Basilisci oculum Exaltata) in frigido factas, mihi hoc unum prodigium, omnium mirabilium supēra s admiracionem, cumprimis stupendum & spectatū dignissimum fuit, quod unica illius Laticis exhibitā gutta (in qua tanquam penuario omnium corporū Cælestium & Terrestrium dispersa virtutes admirādo artificio invisibiliter coacervata, imō in qua totus mundus Astralicē cōcentratus erat) hominem deplorata valetudinis & mortis vicinum sua Ignea, Astrali & Cælesti Natura Invisibili insuendo Cordi radium Vitæ Naturalis, Vitæq. organa renovando, & defunctam Naturam (per accidentium agritudinem causantium remotionem) reparando, una nocte ad firmam & perfectam revocavit incolumitatem: Corpora enim Humana subito & quasi miraculosē, à quibuscunq. infirmis atibus desperatis (secundum Deum videlicet, nam multi morbi sunt in vas a pena Divina, quorum curatio in Natura non querenda) Regalis hac, & omnium aliarum medicinarum Imperatrix resurgere facit: siquidem totus hic novus mundus regeneratus, parvum veterem corruptibilem mundum hoc est Hominem virtute

Regene-

Page from Oswald Croll's *Basilica chymica*  
with the name of Michael Sendivogius encoded with capital letters.

The copper plates with symbolic engravings from Maier's *Symbola aureae mensae* were used again in *Viridarium chymicum* (1624) by Daniel Stolcius; but this time the Twelfth Adept's name was fully revealed as MICHAEL SENDIVOGIUS POLONUS. The picture is accompanied (as are all the emblems in this book) by a short poem:

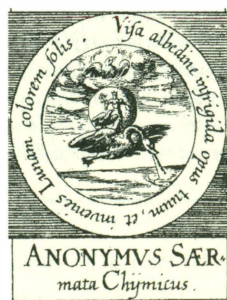


Though this name in the past  
Has been kept in oblivion,  
Its praise now penetrates the darkness,  
As it ought to be, indeed.

Prague in Bohemia  
Has well acknowledged his works.  
He has written twelve books  
And taught accordingly.

He said: Saturn  
Himself must water the earth  
If it, dear sun and moon,  
Shall bear your beautiful flowers.<sup>10</sup>

Stolcius was a graduate of the university in Prague, where he received the bachelor's and master's degrees for two theses dealing with astrology in 1618 and 1619, and in 1621 he studied at Marburg.<sup>11</sup> He was a disciple of Maier and certainly must have met Sendivogius personally, so his testimony is very important.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, in the original Latin, the third line of the quoted poem contains the phrase "*Fama e tenebris*," which may be a hidden reference to *Fama Fraternitatis*.



Symbolic "seal" of "Anonymus Sarmata"  
(from Johann Daniel Mylius's *Opus medico-chymicum*).

10. The translation is from Paul Allen (ed.), *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology*, Blauvelt, NY, 1981, p. 461.

11. John Read, *Prelude to chemistry*, London, 1936, p. 314.

12. *Ibid.* p. 255. See also Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–89.

Another catalogue of great adepts and alchemical authors was included in *Opus medico-chymicum* (1618) by Johann Daniel Mylius (1585–1628?) as a series of 160 “Seals of the Philosophers,” among whom there is also one for “ANONYMUS SAERMATA Chymicus.” The fact that the name *Sarmata* is misspelled may indicate that Mylius was not aware of its meaning and the alchemist’s identity but simply incorporated Maier’s list of twelve adepts into his own. The list of Mylius also starts with Hermes Trismegistus and ends—in a less humble way than Maier’s—with his own name. The philosopher preceding him is Oswald Croll, who was twenty years older—which clearly suggests that Mylius regarded him as his immediate predecessor and master. The adept before Croll is “AUTHOR DE LAPIDE Philosophorum in 12. capitibus,” apparently Croll’s teacher in this succession of philosophers—who can be none other than Michael Sendivogius, or Croll’s and Maier’s “Heliocantharus Borealis,” whose most celebrated work, *Novum lumen chymicum*, was first published in Prague in 1604 under the title *De lapide philosophorum tractatus duodecim*.



The last three “seals of philosophers”  
in Johann Daniel Mylius’s *Opus medico-chymicum*.

Daniel Stolcius used these engravings for his other book—*Hortulus hermeticus* (1627)—but the original order was slightly changed because the copper plates were cut into smaller sets.<sup>13</sup> This time, just as Croll and Maier had done before, he did not reveal the hidden name of the anonymous adept under either of his seals, presumably because he was asked not to do so and to comply with Sendivogius’s wish to remain unknown. The same attitude

13. Adam McLean, Introduction, *op. cit.* The original arrangement of the seals is reproduced in Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *The Golden Game: Alchemical Engravings of the Seventeenth Century*, London, 1988, p. 149.

can be found in Arthur Dee's (the son of John Dee) *Fasciculus chemicus* (first published in Paris in 1631). He makes it clear that he knows the author (perhaps even personally) but does not reveal his name when he writes:

As for that clear water sought for by many found by few, yet obvious and profitable unto all, which is the base of the philosophers' work, a noble Polonian not more famous for his learning then subtlety of wit (not named, whose name notwithstanding a double Anagram hath betrayed). In his *Novum Lumen Chymicum*, *Parabola* and *Aenigma*, and also in his tract on Sulphur, he hath spoken largely and freely enough; yea he hath expressed all things concerning it so plainly, that nothing could be more satisfactory to him that desireth more.<sup>14</sup>

An "unknown philosopher" is also mentioned in the writings of other alchemical authors of the early seventeenth century, and it is almost certain that in most cases it is Michael Sendivogius who is hiding behind that designation. In the second quarter of the seventeenth century, when Sendivogius's name became widely known, many more alchemists quoted him with great reverence, no longer keeping the secret. One of the more interesting testimonies—especially in the Rosicrucian context—is found in the poem by John Gladbury included in the preface to *Sal, lumen & spiritus mundi philosophici* (1657):

Nor dare I without Sendivogius' Torch,  
Approximate you nearer then the Porch  
Lest I (presumptuous) should be gaz'd upon  
By those that have their Wedding-Garments on.<sup>15</sup>

The allusion is clearly to the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1616), to which only those knowing the teachings of Sendivogius can be admitted, while others must stay in the porch of the church and thus cannot witness the ceremony.

John French (1616–1657), another English alchemist and the translator of Sendivogius's main works—published as *A New Light of Alchymie*

14. The London edition of 1650, p. 169; quoted in Zbigniew Szydło, *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands: The Alchemy of Michael Sendivogius*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 121.

15. Quoted in Zbigniew Szydło, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

(1650)—extensively quotes in the Preface to his famous *Art of distillation* (1651) the Polish alchemist and calls him “the last of known philosophers,” thus following Maier, Stolcius, and Mylius in granting him that eminent place in the succession of alchemical adepts. He completes the preface with a statement that refers to the meaning of Heliocantharus Borealis, or Glorifier of the Northern Sun—the name given to Sendivogius by Oswald Croll:

I am of the same mind with Sendivogius that the Fourth Monarchy that is northern is dawning, in which (as the ancient philosophers did divine) all arts and sciences shall flourish, and greater and more things shall be discovered than in the three former. These monarchies the philosophers reckon not according to the more potent, but according to the corners of the world, whereof the northern is the last and, indeed, is no other than the Golden Age in which all tyranny, oppression, envy, and covetousness shall cease, when there shall be one prince and one people abounding with love and mercy, and flourishing in peace, which day I earnestly expect.<sup>16</sup>

The “Fourth Monarchy,” or *Quarta Monarchia*, was an important political concept of the Rosicrucian *Fama* of 1614 but is earlier described at length in the preface to the *Treatise on Sulphur* by Sendivogius (1613) to which John French refers.

All of this evidence proves beyond any reasonable doubt that Michael Sendivogius was very highly regarded—even worshiped—by his contemporaries of the Rosicrucian period, and yet he is perhaps the most ill-treated and misrepresented figure in the history of alchemy. Most modern accounts of his life picture him as a charlatan and “puffer,” and most discussions of early Rosicrucianism do not even mention him.<sup>17</sup> One explanation that may account for removing Sendivogius from the high place in the alchemical pantheon given to him by Michael Maier is certainly his obsession with secrecy, but it was the publication of a certain

16. Transcription at Adam McLean's web site ([http://www.levity.com/alchemy/jf\\_pref.html](http://www.levity.com/alchemy/jf_pref.html)).

17. See for example Arthur Edward Waite, *Alchemists Through the Ages*, Garber Publications, Blauvelt, NY, 1970; Jacques Sadoul, *Alchemists and Gold*, Olga Sieveking, trans., London, 1972; Kenneth Rayner Johnson, *The Fulcanelli Phenomenon*, Jersey, 1980; Stanislas Klosowski de Rola, *op. cit.*; Frances Yates, *op. cit.*; A.E. Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, London, 1924; Christopher McIntosh, *op. cit.*

letter in 1655 that determined the attitude of most historians of alchemy toward the Polish alchemist for the next three hundred years.

The letter in question, dated June 12, 1651 from Warsaw, is one of the three known early biographies of Michael Sendivogius.<sup>18</sup> It was written by Pierre Des Noyers (d. 1693) to a friend of Pierre Borel, who included it in his *Trésor de recherches et antiquités gauloises et françoises* (1655). Des Noyers was a secretary to Marie-Louise, the queen of Poland, and in 1658 was granted the rights of Polish nobility for his services to King John Casimir. The main purpose of his letter was to prove that Michael Sendivogius was not the author of *De lapide philosophorum* (*Novum lumen chymicum*) but acquired it—together with a small amount of alchemical tincture—from a mysterious Cosmopolite, whom he had helped escape from prison in Saxony. That Cosmopolite, whose real name Des Noyers did not know, was later identified as the Scottish alchemist Alexander Seton, even though he is called “an Englishman” by both Des Noyers and another early biographer—Girolamo Pinocci.<sup>19</sup>

During the seventeenth century it was impossible for a well-educated person—the royal secretary who had to deal with international politics all the time—to confuse the kingdoms of Scotland and England. This is an important point undermining the reliability of this source and, as we shall see, suggesting a totally different interpretation of the whole episode.

Pierre Borel, the publisher of the letter, was not quite convinced, since he included another—probably earlier—biography of Sendivogius in the same volume: *Vita Sendivogii Poloni nobilis baronis*, written by an anonymous German and based on the information obtained by him from Jan Budowski, a servant and companion of the alchemist. It presents an absolutely different picture of Sendivogius, one of an alchemical philosopher and adept possessing the philosopher’s stone and performing numerous transmutations—but also clever enough to fake some of them, pretending that he was ignorant in order to escape the attention of greedy princes. And yet it was dismissed by later historians of alchemy as unreliable.

The third of the early biographers—the already mentioned Girolamo Pinocci (1613–1676)—was a secretary to King John Casimir of Poland

18. An English translation of the main part of it can be found in Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–134.

19. He says “I call him by this name because I was unable to discover his real name,” *ibid.*, p. 130.

and a friend of Des Noyers. He was a man of great merit to Polish culture as the editor of the country's first newspaper, reorganizer of the Royal Chancellery, and collector of old manuscripts.<sup>20</sup> His version of the alchemist's life was published in French in 1669 as *Lettre missive, contenant la vie de Sendivogius* by Poliarco Micigno (an anagram of his name).<sup>21</sup> It is obvious that Pinocci used the information of Des Noyers, so the story is basically the same. Some facts, however (probably obtained by him from other sources), differ considerably and are mutually incompatible.



Illust. D<sup>no</sup>. HIERONYMUS  
Pinocci S. Reg. Maieſt. Polon.  
à Secret. cuſt Arch. et quon.  
Legat. in Angl. atq. Holland.

Portrait of Girolamo Pinocci.

The authorship of *Novum lumen chymicum* is of crucial importance because of its later enormous influence; consequently, I will briefly discuss a few of the factual statements in Des Noyers's letter in the light of primary sources examined by Polish and Czech researchers, whose work remains practically unknown to their Western European and American colleagues.

20. Karolina Targosz, *Hieronim Pinocci*, Warsaw, 1967.

21. As an appendix to *Les Oeuvres du Cosmopolite*, Paris, 1669; in 1683 a German translation was published in Hamburg as a separate print—*Michael Sendivogii Leben*—and differs in some details from the French version.

First of all, we must note that there are very few verifiable facts given by him, even though the whole episode of the Cosmopolite's escape from prison is described in such amusing detail:

He [Sendivogius] went to the prison in a little carriage such as was used in that part of the country, and fetched the Cosmopolite, whom he had to carry out.... He insisted on going round by way of the house where his wife was living, because he wanted to take her with him; and when she came out he sent her back to find some of the powder that he had hidden, after which she made all speed to get into the coach.<sup>22</sup>

Writing half a century after the events that he purports to describe and that were not witnessed by anyone, Des Noyers's certainly could not know these details, and therefore most of his account is pure literary fiction. What he could know, on the other hand, is either lacking or wrong. As already mentioned, he does not know the real name of the Cosmopolite and makes him an Englishman—but he also does not know the name of the duke of Saxony who imprisoned him. Let us examine the major facts described by Des Noyers in the light of primary sources:

[1.] Michael Sendivogius, whom a Polish author accidentally listed among the Polish nobility, was a Moravian, born in Moravia but living in Cracow.<sup>23</sup>

This statement shows to what extent Des Noyers was misinformed. The Polish author whom he does not name was certainly Bartosz Paprocki (1543–1614), a prolific writer, often called the father of Polish and Czech genealogy because he wrote the earliest genealogical works about the nobility of both nations.<sup>24</sup> He did not, however, list the family of Michael Sendivogius in any of those books, as it was relatively unimportant. It was only after he had met Sendivogius personally that he dedicated one part of his

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22. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Karel Krejčel, *Bartoloměj Paprocki z Hlohov a Paprocké Věle. Život—dílo—forma a jazyk*, Prague, 1946.

history of the world—*Ogród królewski* (*The Royal Garden*, 1599) to the Polish alchemist. Instead of just a plain dedication, he wrote a lengthy letter (15 pages *in quarto*) dated August 16, 1599 from Prague, preceded by a woodcut of Sendivogius's coat of arms and delineating the genealogy of his family, which can be confirmed by Polish primary sources.<sup>25</sup> Even more important, in 1600, the Polish parliament (*Seym*) granted Sendivogius the right to alter his arms and issued a diploma signed by King Sigismund III Vasa and all senators of the Kingdom of Poland, in which he is expressly identified as a Polish nobleman from the county of Czchów. Two copies of this entry in the Royal Metrica have been preserved.<sup>26</sup>

Even many years later—in 1626—when he was made privy councilor to Emperor Ferdinand II, the nomination was formally confirmed at the castle court in Cracow, and he was called a subject of the king of Poland.<sup>27</sup> In the records of a court case against him in Prague in 1599—in which Oswald Croll was one of the witnesses—he is also called “polnische Herr” (Polish gentleman) and “polnische Herr Arzeney” [Polish gentleman doctor].<sup>28</sup> Contemporary alchemical authors—including Michael Maier and Daniel Stolcius, both of whom knew him personally—and publishers of his treatises call him “Polonus” or “Sarmata.” Thus, there is no trace of doubt about his nationality and noble status.

[2.] After his [Seton's] death Sendivogius thought that the wife might know something of her husband's secret, so he married her in the hope of getting it out of her.<sup>29</sup>

There is no evidence that Michael Sendivogius married again after his first wife, Veronica Stiebar, died in 1599. We do know, however, that he

25. Rafał T. Prinke, “Michał Sędziwój—pochodzenie, rodzina, herb,” *Gens. Kwartalnik Towarzystwa Genealogiczno-Heraldycznego*, 1992, no. 4, pp. 33–49.

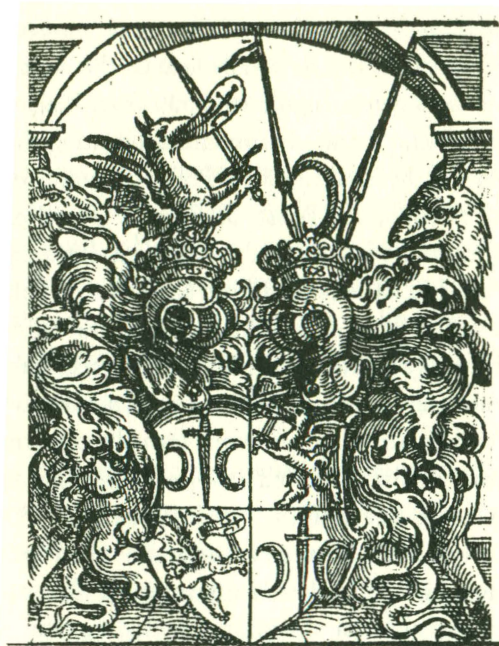
26. Transcription is available on my Web site at <http://main.amu.edu.pl/~rafalp/HERM/SENDI/sedz-agd.htm>. I am indebted to Jerzy Michta for allowing me to use it.

27. The entry from the castle court records in Cracow was found by Roman Bugaj and published in his *Michał Sędziwój (1566–1636). Życie i pisma*, Warsaw, 1968, pp. 146–148. This book remains the fundamental and most comprehensive work on the life of Sendivogius.

28. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, pp. 93–94. These records were found by Bedřich Peška and used for his article “Pražský měšťan a polský alchemista” (Prague burgher and Polish alchemist), *Světlozor*, 1872, pp. 40–42. They were reexamined by Roman Bugaj and discussed in his monograph.

29. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 132.





Michael Sendivogius's coat-of-arms  
(from *Ogród królewski* by Bartosz Paprocki).

was engaged to Anna Belvičova of Štampach at that time, but the engagement was broken in 1605.<sup>30</sup> Girolamo Pinocci differs from Des Noyers on this point and says that Seton's widow became Sendivogius's lover. As usual, it seems that he had heard something, but the information was far from precise. The alchemist, indeed, had a lover in Cracow, but she certainly was not Seton's widow. Walerian Nekanda Trepka, a Polish nobleman living near Cracow, who spent most of his life tracing people falsely pretending to be of noble status, wrote down all his findings during the years 1615–1640. His manuscript is an important source for the history of social relations and the mentality of the seventeenth-century Poles, but he has no connection to alchemy and therefore is highly credible for us. The relevant fragment of his text says:

Rusino[w]ski was the name of a plebeian from Kazimierz near Cracow.... He served Stanisław Dębieński in the county of Cracow for

30. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

several years in 1630 and later. His sister was a whore for nearly twenty years to the alchemist Sendivogius who lived in Cracow beyond the gate of St. Anna until 1626. Later that Sendivogius went to Germany and lived there.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, there is no place for marrying Seton's widow in the tight chronology of Sendivogius's relationships with women.

[3.] On returning to Moravia he was arrested by a local nobleman ... and was made a prisoner in the belief that he knew the secret. ... [Sendivogius] cut through one of the bars on the window of his cell. Then he made a rope of all his clothes and escaped stark naked. He accused his captor to the emperor, who imposed a large fine and made him give a whole village to Sendivogius, one of whose daughters later had it as a marriage dowry.<sup>32</sup>

This episode is composed from elements of several independent events and shows how imprecise Des Noyers's information was, and how he produced literary fiction from it. Josef Zúkal, a Czech historian, analyzed all available archival sources from the area and period in question and found no confirmation of Sendivogius's imprisonment in Moravia. He points out that an event like that could not have passed unnoticed in contemporary sources and tradition.<sup>33</sup> The accusation, court case, fine, giving a village to Sendivogius and then to his daughter—all would have been properly recorded. Most probably, Des Noyers heard something about Sendivogius's imprisonment by Johann Heinrich von Mühlenfels in the castle of Neidlingen (during his visit at the court of Frederick, duke of Württemberg, in 1605), from which he indeed escaped. Both King Sigismund of Poland and Emperor Rudolf reacted immediately, and Mühlenfels was executed in Stuttgart in 1607. The court records were published by Christoph Gottlieb von Murr in 1805 and show that

31. Walerian Nekanda Trepka, *Liber generationis plebeanorum (Liber Chamorum)*, edited by Włodzimierz Dworzaczek et al., Wrocław, Warsaw, Cracow, 1963, pp. 465–466. A new edition prepared by Rafał Leszczyński, Wrocław, Warsaw, Cracow, 1995, p. 352.

32. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–133.

33. Josef Zúkal, "Alchymista Michal Sendivoj pánem na Kravařích a Koutech. Hlavně dle akt Zemského archivu opavského," *Věstník Matice opavské věnovany kulturním a vědeckým potřebám slezským*, 1909, no. 17, p. 2. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

Sendivogius was given the Neidlingen estate by Duke Frederick.<sup>34</sup> It was not, however, the same estate held by his daughter as her marriage dowry—the villages of Kravaž and Kouty in Silesia—because that was given to Sendivogius by Emperor Ferdinand II in 1630 and later passed on to her husband's family, the barons of Eichendorf.<sup>35</sup>

[4.] On his return to Poland, Sendivogius protested to Wolski, the Grand Marshall of the Kingdom, that if he had the means to do the Work he could have made a similar powder.... The Grand Marshall, finding himself defrauded of six thousand francs, told Sendivogius that he was a rogue and that if he wished he could have him hanged.<sup>36</sup>

Mikołaj Wolski (1553–1630) was a lifelong patron and friend of Sendivogius, but he became the grand marshall of Poland only in 1616, whereas the events described here were supposed to have taken place shortly after the alchemist's return to Poland in 1606.<sup>37</sup> Des Noyers suggests that Sendivogius defrauded Wolski of his money, but we find no confirmation of this. Quite the contrary, Michael Sendivogius appears several times at the municipal court in Cracow as late as 1626 as a plenipotentiary for Mikołaj Wolski, who wanted to buy a certain house in the town.<sup>38</sup> It is difficult to assume that Wolski would allow someone who defrauded him to represent him at court.

[5.] Having worked unavailingly on the Cosmopolite's memoirs, he proposed publishing the book.<sup>39</sup>

The chronology of Des Noyers is obviously impossible: he had the Cosmopolite dying in January of 1604, followed by Sendivogius's marriage to

34. Christoph Gottlieb von Murr, *Litterarische Nachrichten zu der Geschichte des sogenannten Goldmachens*, Leipzig 1805, p. 54–79.

35. Josef Zukal, *Slezské konfiskace 1620–1630*, Prague, 1916, p. 116; Christian Ritter d'Elvert, "Der Alchemist Sendivogius, der Gründer der freiherrlichen Familie Eichendorf in Mähren und Schlesien," *Notizen-Blatt der historisch-statistischen Section der kais. königl. mährisch-schlesischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung des Ackerbaues, der Natur- und Landeskunde*, Brünn 1883, no. 3.

36. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

37. Antoni Gąsiorowski (ed.), *Urzednicy centralni i nadworni Polski XIV–XVIII wieku. Spisy*, Kórnik, 1992, p. 80.

38. Stanisław Tomkowicz, *Przyczynki do historii kultury Krakowa w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, Lwów, 1912, pp. 277–280.

39. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

his widow; then came his travels and extravagant life followed by his attempts to produce the tincture and defrauding lots of money; finally there came his charlatantry and eventual publication of the Cosmopolite's treatise. *De lapide philosophorum*, however, had gone through at least two editions during the year 1604 itself: in Prague and in Frankfurt (the edition without the place of printing was probably identical with that published in Prague).<sup>40</sup> Moreover, a copy that served J. B. Bruck of Rotenperk as the basis for his translation into Czech (completed in January of 1605) has a note made by him saying that he had received the book on September 20, 1604 from one Adamus Giskry Bielsky, a burgher of Prague New Town, who brought it from the Imperial Library in the castle of Krumlov.<sup>41</sup> Thus we can pinpoint the publication date to the first half of 1604—and maybe even earlier—leaving no time for Sendivogius to even bring it to Prague, had he obtained it from the Cosmopolite's widow after their marriage.

[6.] In the hope that it would be thought to be his own work, he introduced into it a certain number of words that he felt might persuade readers that he was the author.... But he had not quite the effrontery to sign his name to it openly, so he made an anagram of it: *Autore me qui DIVI LESCHI GENUS AMO*.<sup>42</sup>

The logic of this statement is so strange that even Girolamo Pinocci, who otherwise repeated Des Noyers's story, found it difficult to believe: "I am of a different opinion. It would be a great absurdity to think so, when he himself [Sendivogius] through hiding his name intended to remain unknown."<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that Sendivogius did not dedicate his books to any rich patrons, princes, or kings, as did most other authors of the time, which shows that he was financially and politically independent. At least eleven editions of this treatise printed before 1613 were anonymous, and one entitled *Tripus chymicus Sendivogianus* was published in Strasburg, still not revealing the author's full name. It was only in 1624 that Daniel

40. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

41. This copy is bound together with Bruck of Rotenperk's translation now in the collection of the National Museum in Prague. The note is quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

42. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

43. Poliarco Micigno, *Lettre missive, contenant la vie de Sendivogius*, p. 27. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

Stolcius divulged the secret in *Viridarium chymicum*, and—during the same year—Ortelius published in Erfurt his commentary entitled *Michaelis Sendivogi Poloni Lumen chymicum novum XII*. Later publishers did not take Des Noyers's fantasies seriously: of forty-eight editions of *Novum lumen chymicum* before 1800, only one (printed in Hamburg and Leipzig in 1751) was attributed to Alexander Seton. So we have the word of Des Noyers against that of a multitude of alchemical authors and publishers. Most important, Daniel Stolcius, living in Prague and certainly knowing all the gossip about Sendivogius, wrote: "He has written twelve books and taught accordingly," which should not leave any trace of doubt concerning the authorship of *De lapide philosophorum tractatus duodecim*.<sup>44</sup>

[7.] Sendivogius died during the year we arrived in Poland, that is in 1646, destitute, in poor health, and at a great age.<sup>45</sup>

Nothing can be more convincing about the unreliability of Des Noyers's information than this statement. Apart from the "great age" of Sendivogius, everything else can be proved wrong by many independent primary sources, of which I will mention only the most important. Extensive research by Josef Zukal in court records of Silesia and Moravia shows that Sendivogius is last mentioned as living on May 20, 1636, and that on August 12, 1636, Maria Veronica "a daughter of the late Sendivogius," appeared at court and demanded four thousand ducats, which the district of Opava owed to her father.<sup>46</sup> In Cracow, where Sendivogius owned several houses, his bequest was discussed by the municipal court in 1637.<sup>47</sup> The date given by Des Noyers cannot be interpreted as a misprint because he is known to have arrived in Poland accompanying Marie-Louise Gonzaga, whose secretary he had been, and she married King Ladislaus IV Vasa in 1646 (and later his brother, John Casimir, in 1649). This misinformation alone—an error of ten years in dating an event closest to him in time—disqualifies the whole of his story completely.

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44. Roman Bugaj (*op. cit.*, p. 111) found records of a court case of 1604 in Prague against one Jindřich Krynger alias Želynsky, a servant of Piotr Tarnowski, who disseminated malicious gossip about Sendivogius. He was found guilty and had to apologize to the alchemist.

45. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

46. Josef Zukal, "Alchymista Michal Sendivogj...", *op. cit.*

47. Ambroży Grabowski, *Starożytnicze wiadomości o Krakowie*, Cracow, 1852, reprinted in Cracow, 1985, p. 280.

As far as the financial situation of Michael Sendivogius at the end of his life is concerned, he owned the largest estate in the Krnov district, consisting of three villages, the value of which was estimated in 1636 to be worth fifteen thousand thalers.<sup>48</sup> He also had a house in Olomouc and several houses in Cracow. Before moving to Kravaž, he had a residence outside the Cracow city walls consisting of two houses and a large garden, which he sold for five thousand florins in 1625 to Krystyna Grochowska, who funded the building of a church and monastery for Reformed Franciscans there (destroyed in 1655 during the Swedish war).<sup>49</sup> This cottage can be seen on a large (over a meter long) panorama of Cracow engraved in 1619 by Matthaeus Merian (1593–1650), the well-known illustrator of many alchemical emblem books.<sup>50</sup> Of his other houses in Cracow, the one at Saint Thomas Street (also called Jewish Street), near Saint Stephen's Church, was known as "the house of Sendivogius" as late as the nineteenth century and was eventually pulled down in 1908.<sup>51</sup>

It is, therefore, evident that it was not Des Noyers who gives correct information, but the anonymous *Vita Sendivogii Poloni* printed together with it by Borel and dismissed as untrustworthy by later historians. The statement in the latter that Sendivogius lived like a prince in Kravaž and received visits and correspondence from learned throughout Europe, is fully corroborated by primary sources. Similarly, the statement about his poor health is obviously exaggerated. Sendivogius traveled extensively until his last days—in December 1635 he went to the imperial court in Vienna, asked by the local parliament of Opava for help to lessen the obligations of the district. The records of the parliamentary sessions say that all previous attempts were fruitless but as "lord Sendivogius is in great favor of the Emperor... even one letter of lord Sendivogius would do more... than any other actions of our parliament."<sup>52</sup> This also shows his social status and political influence shortly before his death. It is possible that he suffered

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48. Josef Zukal, "Alchymista Michal Sendivoj...", *op. cit.*, p. 7.

49. Jan Pasiecznik, *Kościół i klasztor reformatorów w Krakowie*, Cracow, 1978, p. 17.

50. One copy of it is in the Czartoryskis' Museum in Cracow. Merian was also the author of another panorama of Cracow in 1638. See Krystyna Dąbrowska-Budziło, *Wśród panoram Krakowa*, Cracow, 1990, pp. 120–122.

51. Adam Chmiel, *Szkice krakowskie*, Cracow, 1939–1947, p. 188.

52. Josef Zukal, "Alchymista Michal Sendivoj...", *op. cit.*; quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, pp. 154–155.

from attacks of gout, as reported by Constantin Schaum to Samuel Hartlib in 1655, but otherwise was quite vigorous and well.<sup>53</sup>

Having thus proven, with respect to Sendivogius, the total unreliability of Des Noyers's account (the only source of the standard and often repeated story), we can now move to the other element of it—the Scottish alchemist Alexander Seton. As already mentioned, Des Noyers did not know his Cosmopolite's name and called him an Englishman (followed in this by Girolamo Pinocci). Later authors identified the two individuals as the same person and added a few other transmutation stories also performed by Seton. Curiously, however, historians of alchemy know nothing about Seton prior to March of 1602, when he supposedly went to the Continent for the first time, whereas he is believed to have died on January 1, 1604. During that year and a half he traveled all over Europe, performed many transmutations, fell in love and got married, was imprisoned and tortured, escaped from prison, and eventually died in Cracow. The chronology is very tight indeed, and it is obvious that many elements of the story were invented, especially as first told by authors of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Some historians (Johann Joachim Becher and Christoph Gottlieb von Murr) tried to identify Alexander Seton with Alexander von Suchten, the chemist from Gdańsk (Danzig); but he died about 1590, making it out of the question.<sup>54</sup> Olaus Borrichius suggested that he was in fact James Butler, a Scottish alchemist active during the reign of James I, which is much later than the accepted lifetime of Seton. Others proposed the Italian alchemist-magician Girolamo Scotto (Otakar Zachar, Włodzimierz Hubicki), but there is equally little to support this hypothesis. The most often quoted testimony of Johann Wolfgang von Dienenheim, a professor of medicine at the university in Freiburg, relating his meeting with Alexander Seton in 1603, was published in his *Medicina universalis* (1610). He described a transmutation performed by the Scottish alchemist in the presence of Jacob Zwinger, a professor from the university in Basel, whose own account of the same event was published by his great-grandson in 1690. The latter was found suspect by Włodzimierz Hubicki, who inspected the originals of

53. Ephemerides 1655 part 3, 29/5/29A–42B, *Hartlib Papers*, CD-ROM, University of Sheffield, 1995. I am indebted to Judith Crawford for references to Sendivogius in *Hartlib Papers*.

54. Włodzimierz Hubicki, "Alexander von Suchten," *Sudhoff's Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften*, 44 (1960), pp. 54–63.

Zwinger's letters and found out that one of them (the famous one addressed to Dr. Schobinger) was written in a different, later hand.<sup>55</sup> Whether it is really so or not, there are other letters by and to Zwinger in which Seton is discussed and one letter to the alchemist himself written in 1604. This would mean that he did not die on the first day of that year, as stated by Des Noyers. Moreover, Dienheim, writing shortly before 1610, says:

Setonius and his servant also remain on this earth, the former is in Germany and the latter in England. I could even give their exact addresses, but this might cause them to be pestered by enquiries from people anxious to know how this great man has fared.<sup>56</sup>

Pinocci also states that Seton, after being rescued by Sendivogius, went to Germany. In order to make his information compatible with that of Des Noyers, he says that Seton died there after a few months, after which Sendivogius contacted his widow, who became his lover.<sup>57</sup> Both versions are obviously just absurd literary fiction, but Seton's return to Germany can be further confirmed by an important primary source. On March 18, 1605, Duke Frederick I of Württemberg issued a warrant asking everyone to help his agent find a Scotsman calling himself Alexander Sydon, or Sylon, or Stuart, who had shown him a transmutation in Stuttgart and promised to disclose alchemical secrets, but then disappeared with a considerable sum of money.<sup>58</sup> It is inconceivable that this important German prince with passionate interest in alchemy and occultism, who obviously had his informants and spies at the courts of other rulers, would not have heard about the spectacular escape and death of Seton that is supposed to have taken place over a year earlier.<sup>59</sup> Especially interesting, however, is that Frederick had quite intensive correspondence with Michael Sendivogius in 1604 and 1605, persuading him to come to Stuttgart, which is quite incompatible

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55. Włodzimierz Hubicki, "The mystery of Alexander Seton, the Cosmopolite," *Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Congress of the History of Science*, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1974, II, 397-400. I am indebted for this reference to Roman Bugaj and Zbigniew Szydło.

56. Quoted in Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

57. Poliarco Micigno, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 107-110.

58. This document was published by Fr. von Weech in *Zeitschrift für Geschichte des Oberrheins*, Bd. 26 (1874), p. 469. Its transcription can be found on my web page at <http://main.amu.edu.pl/~rafalp/HERM/SETON/fryd1.htm>.

59. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-35; Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-117.



with the story told by Pierre Des Noyers.<sup>60</sup> If Sendivogius's alchemical knowledge, the tincture he owned, and his main treatise all came from Alexander Seton, and Frederick had already found out that Seton was a cheater, why would he invite Sendivogius and give him the land estate and castle of Neidlingen?

These two facts—the warrant and Frederick's correspondence with Sendivogius at the same time—actually appear to indicate that the whole episode of Seton's imprisonment by Christian of Saxony and escape with the help of Sendivogius may have been a product of Des Noyers's imagination or that of his informants. Or—and this is the most probable explanation—he mixed elements of stories he heard about various alchemists and produced one piece with a colorful romantic hero. In any case, Seton was most certainly alive in 1605 and quite possibly as late as 1610. This conclusion is further confirmed by Benedictus Nicolaus Peträus, very well informed on details of other alchemists' lives, who says that Alexander Seton, also known as Carnobe, was a friend of Michael Sendivogius and visited Andreä ab Habernfeld, an author of several alchemical works, in Zealand, before going back to England, where he spent the rest of his life in peace.<sup>61</sup> That the friendship of both alchemists—Seton and Sendivogius—started much earlier is also indicated by Friedrich Roth-Scholtz, the editor of collected works of Sendivogius, who planned to write his biography and collected information about him. Unfortunately, that biography was never published, but he stated elsewhere that they met for the first time at the university in Altdorf.<sup>62</sup>

All these conjectures about the identity of Alexander Seton and his relationship with Michael Sendivogius found quite unexpected clarification in the research of Henryk Barycz on Jan Osmolski.<sup>63</sup> Osmolski (ca. 1510–1593/1594) was quite rich and very well educated—which was typical for the Calvinist nobility in Renaissance Poland—but for political

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60. Christof Gottlieb von Murr, *op. cit.*, p. 65; Christian Friedrich Sattler, *Geschichte des Herzogthums Württemberg unter Regierung der Herzogen*, vol. 5, Ulm-Stettin, 1772, p. 268. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

61. Benedictus Nicolaus Peträus, preface to *Fr. Basilii Valentini Chymische Schriften*, Hamburg, 1717, p. 37.

62. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

63. Henryk Barycz, "Przyjacieli i protektor zagranicznych uczonych," in his *W blaskach epoki odrodzenia*, Warsaw, 1968, pp. 141–160.

reasons left Poland after the election of Stephen Báthory to the throne. He took with him the enormous sum of eighty thousand thalers and settled down in Basel, where he attended public lectures at the university and made friends with its professors. His house soon became a center of informal university life, and he became so popular and respected that Johann Nicolaus Stupanus, professor of mathematics, preceded a collection of physical and astronomical treatises published by him in 1577 with a lengthy and enthusiastic presentation of Osmolski as a great lover and patron of the arts and sciences and later also dedicated to him the Latin translation of Machiavelli's works (1580). Theodore Zwinger, perhaps the most famous professor in Basel at the time, dedicated to Jan Osmolski the third volume of his monumental *Theatrum humanae vitae* (1586) and corresponded with him whenever Osmolski left Basel—as did Johann Jacob Grynaeus and Christian Wurtsisen (who introduced Galileo to the idea of heliocentricity).

At the same time, Osmolski helped many Polish students financially, bringing them to Basel and sending them to other universities. In 1578 he went to Poland, traveling via Freiburg (where he matriculated at the university), Nuremberg, and Prague (where he contacted Emperor Rudolf II). After a short stay at his estate in Osmolice, he returned to Basel, taking with him his two nephews—Piotr and Adam Gorajskis—who matriculated at the university for the academic year 1579–1580. Professor Grynaeus dedicated to them his *Chronologia brevis evangelicae historiae* (published in March 1580), and in the preface he glorifies their uncle as “the best and most generous patron of scholars.” Osmolski's position in the university milieu was so high by then that he was allowed to participate in the meetings of its senate as the only nonprofessor.

In 1585 he went to Poland again, but on his way back the following year he stayed in Nuremberg because of an illness and the uncertain situation in Poland after the death of King Stephen Báthory. He wrote to his friends in Basel that he would soon return to his beloved city, but then he made an acquaintance that kept him in the capital of Franconia for nearly five years—until at least April 1591. His new friend was none other than “Alexander Seton, a Scottish count,” as Osmolski called him. Osmolski described his contacts with Seton in letters to professors Theodore Zwinger and Johann Jacob Grynaeus, some of which have fortunately survived and were studied by Henryk Barycz in the Basel

University library.<sup>64</sup> Initially, as a stern Calvinist, he did not hide his reserve toward the Scotsman's alchemical experiments; later his scientific curiosity won out, and he wanted to learn more about the hermetic secrets. Seton, however, was very secretive; he "did not allow a single accidental word to slip out of his mouth and always spoke like an oracle."<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, they were working together and soon became so well known that the city council of Nuremberg received them with great honors in the town hall. In the winter of 1586–1587, Alexander Seton performed a spectacular transmutation in the presence of the margrave of Ansbach (who blew the bellows himself), the count of Mansfeld, a local doctor, and Jan Osmolski. The experiment was to change, in the course of less than two hours, mercury into "purissimum aurum" (purest gold), as he enthusiastically reported in his letters to friends in Basel. Later in 1587, Seton left Nuremberg and went to Danzig, but the two men remained in contact through lively correspondence. These letters are not known to have survived, but Osmolski says in others that he received several of them, in which Seton informed him about the political situation in Poland and that the experiments were only "minimally magical."

Osmolski's letters are a very important source for many reasons. First of all, they prove that Alexander Seton did not appear out of nowhere or leave Scotland in 1602, because he had already been traveling around Europe and performing transmutations almost twenty years earlier. It becomes clear why the transmutation performed at Basel in 1603 and later described by Johann Wolfgang von Diennehm took place in the presence of Jacob Zwinger—the son and successor of Theodore Zwinger—with whom Seton had a previously arranged appointment (as is evident from his story).<sup>66</sup> Jacob Zwinger had obviously known Jan Osmolski and was intrigued by his reports about Seton's transmutations. They must have corresponded for ten years or so before the Scottish alchemist went to Basel, so it is not unlikely that some of their letters are still waiting to be discovered. It also explains why Diennehm called him "quite elderly"

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64. Some of Osmolski's letters were published in Wotschke, *Der Briefwechsel der Schweizer mit den Polen*, Leipzig, 1908, but not the ones concerning Seton.

65. Quoted in Henryk Barycz, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

66. The partial English translation of Diennehm's account in Jacques Sadoul, pp. 121–122 is so corrupted that it hardly resembles the original. I am indebted for the unpublished translation from the original Latin to Roman Bugaj.

(*maturus sane*) in 1603, and it makes rather unbelievable the romantic story of ravishing and eventually marrying a pretty girl who fell in love with him in Munich. Since Osmolski—himself a learned man—stressed Seton's erudition and never said he was a young man, we may assume that in 1586 he must have been more than thirty years old, and therefore was born about 1550 or even earlier.

Another important lead is the fact that Jan Osmolski, who was childless himself, was the uncle of Piotr and Adam Gorajski mentioned earlier, whom he took to Basel in 1579. Adam Gorajski (died 1602) remained in contact with the university there for many years and was the executor of his uncle's will, who left his substantial library to Professor Grynaeus and donations to the university. His brother Piotr (died 1619) was greatly interested in alchemy and mining throughout his life, offering his services and inventions to King Sigismund III of Poland; Emperor Rudolph II; elector of Brandenburg; and even the Republic of Venice.<sup>67</sup> As he said himself, he had spent two hundred thousand ducats on alchemical experiments, which shows how enthusiastic he was about it. A nephew of the two brothers—Marcjan Gorajski—was also an alchemist of some reputation. There is a manuscript in the British Library (Sloane 2083) that includes *Sequentia ex auditionibus Hermetis, descripta ex Libro D. Marciani Gorayski de Goray, Nobilis Poloni 1622*. The anonymous English author contacted him personally—the following section of the same manuscript contains his notes “from the colloquium with the same Sir Gorayski de Goray.”<sup>68</sup>

Returning to Michael Sendivogius, we may recall that the third part of *Ogród królewski* by Bartosz Paprocki was dedicated to him in 1599. The second part was inscribed to Archduke Maximilian, the former candidate to the Polish throne, whom both Paprocki and Osmolski had supported, while the first part (or actually the whole book) was dedicated to none other than Piotr Gorajski.<sup>69</sup> Paprocki glorifies the friendship between Sendivogius and Gorajski, who had “similar spiritual and heroic virtues” and “are like brothers.” He also wrote a collection of short poems in Czech, some of which were dedicated to Sendivogius, his sons, and his

67. Halina Heitzmanowa, “Żywot człowieka poczciwego. Piotr Gorajski,” *Teki Historyczne*, vol. 3, 1949, pp. 156–184.

68. Stanisław Kot, “Anglo-Polonica,” *Nauka Polska*, vol. 20, pp. 94–96.

69. Karel Krejčí, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

friend Ludvik Korálek of Těšín (*Jiná částka*, 1598). He was so popular at that time that other poets also wrote panegyrics intended to gain the alchemist's sympathy. One of them was the court poet of Emperor Rudolf II—Georg Carolides of Karlsperk (1579–1612)—who published a collection of poems dedicated to the elder son of Sendivogius and entitled *Praecepta institutionis generosae indolis, jambico dimetro conscripta ad Illustrissimi et Magnanimi Herois, Domini Michaelis Sendivogii, de Skorsko et Lukovisze Lib. Baronis filium primogenitum Christophorum Michaellem Sendivogium* (1598). It included a number of shorter pieces ascribed to other members of Michael Sendivogius's family (his uncles and cousins) as well as the brothers Adam and Piotr Gorajskis, thus confirming Paprocki's statement about their great friendship.

Putting together all these pieces of our puzzle known so far, it seems that Jan Osmolski, after his contacts with Seton in Nuremberg in 1586 and 1587 and later correspondence, was so impressed that he wanted his nephews to learn alchemy from the Scottish adept and sent them to the university in Altdorf near Nuremberg (founded by Rudolf II in 1578), where other known alchemists also studied, including Michael Maier and Ludvik Korálek.<sup>70</sup> Since Seton had been so well received there earlier, he certainly visited Nuremberg again and met with the Gorajskis. Michael Sendivogius matriculated there in 1594 (at that time he was already called a courtier of Emperor Rudolf II); but he may have stayed in Altdorf or Nuremberg earlier. Alchemy was not officially taught at universities, thus it was customary for people interested in it to meet informally at those centers of learning. We find further confirmation of Sendivogius's longer stay in the area of Nuremberg in the elegy of Joannes Chorinnus (Chorinský) on the death of the alchemist's wife on October 23, 1599, entitled *Illustris foeminae D. Dn. Veronicae Stiberiae é nobiliss. familia apud Francos oriunde, illustris: D. D. Michaelis Christophori Sendivogij de Skorsko et Lukovicze L. B. Serenis: Regis Poloniae Secretarii conjugis desideratissime*. Paprocki also mentions her in *Ogród królewski* as "Veronika s Tyberin from Franconia," but no other details about her family have been uncovered thus far.

Fortunately, the Polish heraldic author included a woodcut illustration

70. Elias von Steinmeyer (ed.), *Die Matrikel der Universität Altdorf*, vol. 1, Würzburg, 1912. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69.

of her coat of arms, which allowed me to identify her as a member of the Stiebar von Buttenheim family.<sup>71</sup> The Stiebars were one of the oldest families of Franconian nobility, known as early as the thirteenth century and holding large estates in the area of Nuremberg (including at least three castles). It would be surprising for her to marry a comparatively poor Polish gentleman—unless the story of ravishing his beloved attributed to Seton was an echo of a similar feat of Sendivogius. The particulars of this marriage need further elucidation, but it is evident that the very high social position of Sendivogius from the very beginning of his stay in Prague was connected in part with it. The elder of their two known sons was born in 1594. If we allow for a period of the couple's acquaintance and engagement and assume that Christoph Michael was not conceived immediately after the wedding or was not the first child (taking into account the high rate of infant mortality), we may date the marriage even back to 1590. Actually, in that year Sendivogius matriculated at the university of Leipzig, which is not far away, but only for the winter semester.<sup>72</sup> This would mean that he lived in the area of Nuremberg and Altdorf long enough to meet Michael Maier (who studied at Altdorf in 1589 and received his master's degree in Frankfort on the Oder in 1591) and Alexander Seton, as reported by Friedrich Roth-Scholtz. Moreover, Sendivogius may well have been one of Jan Osmolski's protégés (of whom there were many), which would explain both his early meeting with Seton and his close friendship with Piotr Gorajski. Interestingly, Sendivogius's arrival at Prague is dated to 1594—according to his own testimony at a later court case—which is the year of Osmolski's death.

Roth-Scholtz informs us further that during his studies in Leipzig (1590), Sendivogius made friends with two professors of that university: Joachim Tancke, who later included Sendivogius's treatise in his *Promptuarium alchemiae* (1614), and Johann Thölde, publisher and possible author of the alchemical treatises attributed to Basilius Valentinus.<sup>73</sup> It was the hometown of Heinrich Khunrath, so he most probably stayed there after receiving his degree at Basel in 1588 (where he studied under

71. Ernst Heinrich Kneschke, *Neues allgemeines Deutsches Adels-Lexicon*, vol. 9, Leipzig, 1870, pp. 36–38.

72. Stanisław Tomkowicz, *Metrica nec non liber nationis Polonicae universitatis Lipsiensis ab anno 1409—usque ad 1600*, Cracow, 1881, p. 29.

73. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

Theodore Zwinger).<sup>74</sup> Two years earlier—in 1586—John Dee and Edward Kelley went to Leipzig for a short visit of about a week.<sup>75</sup>

The Continental adventures of the two Englishmen are quite well known from Dee's diaries until his return home in 1588, but the later spectacular career and equally spectacular fall of Edward Kelley has not been adequately researched yet.<sup>76</sup> Some Czech records were found by the journalist Josef Svátek in the nineteenth century and incorporated in his books.<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately, he did not give precise references for particular facts, merely indicating which archival collections he had used. Nevertheless, it is quite trustworthy for detailed information whenever it is not derived from earlier authors, as indicated by Otakar Zachar—the most scholarly of Czech historians of alchemy—in his lengthy review of that book, which he calls “a great step forward in comparison to earlier works on the subject.”<sup>78</sup>

It is known that during their stay in Třeboň, Dee did not travel much, while Kelley often went to Prague and Cracow. After Dee's departure, Kelley was ennobled by Rudolf II in 1588 and received Czech citizenship in August 1589. His unwearied patron Vilém of Rožmberk (1535–1592) gave him substantial land: the castle of Liběň and the estate of Nový Liběň near Jílové with adjoining property. The formal deed of the transaction, seen by Josef Svátek, was signed on April 12, 1590 in the Rožmberk Palace in Prague. Kelley then bought a town estate called Fumberk in Jílové, which consisted of a large house, brewery, mill, and a few smaller buildings, as well as the Kopovský house in Prague, where he lived with his family for some time.<sup>79</sup> His downfall began at the end of April 1591, when he killed Jiří Hunkler in a duel—which was expressly forbidden by the emperor.

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74. Carlos Gilly, *Johann Valentin Andreä 1586–1986. Die Manifeste der Rosenkreuzerbruderschaft. Katalog einer Ausstellung in der Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica*, Amsterdam, 1986, p. 33.

75. Méric Casaubon (ed.), *A true and faithful relation...*, London, 1659, p. 421–423 [misprinted as 417–423]. Modern facsimile edition by Clay Holden, New York, 1992. See also the itinerary of their Continental journeys on my Web pages at <http://main.amu.edu.pl/~rafalp/HERM/DEE/dee-tab.htm>.

76. The fullest account remains that in Charlotte Fell-Smith, *John Dee (1527–1608)*, London, 1909.

77. Josef Svátek, *Culturhistorische Bilder aus Böhmen*, Vienna, 1879, and its expanded version in Czech *Obrazy z kulturních dějin český*, Prague, 1891.

78. Otakar Zachar, “Rudolf II. a alchymisté,” *Časopis Musea Království Českého*, 86, 1912, pp. 417–424 and 87, 1913, pp. 148–257.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 422–423.

At first he was kept under house arrest together with his family and servants, and then he was imprisoned in the Chuderký tower in Křivoklát. Svátek quotes a letter from the imperial bailiff Hayden to the commander of the Prague castle, dated February 8, 1592. In the letter he is instructed to find out from Kelley how to prepare "the tincture for precious stones" and how to make *aurum potabile* (drinkable gold).<sup>80</sup> It is not certain if he escaped from the tower and broke his leg, as the often repeated story goes. Nevertheless, he was released somehow and regained his estate, because in 1594 he is recorded as owing money to someone in Prague—and that was the year when we know Michael Sendivogius and Piotr Gorajski arrived in Prague. According to Josef Svátek, Kelley met Sendivogius in Germany in 1590, when he was traveling to Poland. As we have seen, the Polish alchemist studied there in that year. Kelley had earlier visited Leipzig and could have gone there in 1590 again—especially since several famous alchemists lived there. It certainly goes too far to suggest that he visited Alexander Seton in Nuremberg and met Sendivogius through him, but it is not an impossible hypothesis at all.

Before going to Prague itself, Sendivogius and his family stayed at one of Kelley's houses in Jílové. Piotr Gorajski was probably with him, because the town was famous for its gold mines and the mint, in which both of them were interested throughout their lives. Svátek gives the reason for Kelley's invitation as his unwillingness to give Sendivogius access to the imperial court, because he might take Kelley's place there; but that must be his own literary elaboration.<sup>81</sup> The years 1594–1599 in the life of Michael Sendivogius are exceptionally well documented with primary sources. Ironically, the bulk of them come from the court case in which Sendivogius was accused of poisoning Ludvik Korálek by his sisters. The case was held before the municipal court in Prague, and many witnesses were examined, including Sendivogius himself. These court records were first discovered by Bedřich Peška before 1872 and investigated again by Roman Bugaj for his monograph published in 1968.<sup>82</sup>

When the whole party arrived in Prague in 1594, they stayed initially at the Inn at Three Feathers (U Tři Per) in Coal Market (Uhelný Trh),

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80. *Ibid.*, p. 423.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

82. The following account is based on Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 82–97. He found errors in Peška's publication on comparing it to the original records.



identified by Peška as “the house with arcades,” now house number nine.<sup>83</sup> Then Sendivogius fell ill and contacted the Prague Old Town pharmacist Mikulaš Lev of Lövenštejn, who was so impressed by his medical and alchemical competence that he invited him to his own house near the church of Saint Nicolaus. Sendivogius stayed there with his family and servants for several weeks. Through this new acquaintance, he met Václav Lavin of Ottenfeld in Moravia, a doctor of medicine, personal physician of Vilém of Rožmberk, and author of an alchemical treatise entitled *Tractatus de coelo terrestri*, who in turn introduced him to Ludvik Korálek of Těšín, a rich merchant and great lover of alchemy.<sup>84</sup> Korálek had a large library of alchemical books and his own laboratory, in which he worked with several friends—including Jan Kapr of Kaprštejn, doctor of law and councillor of Rudolf II—and even employed special assistants. Sendivogius was soon admitted to participate in their experiments and became the teacher of the group.

The most intriguing of these court records are the testimonies of Korálek's friends who said that Sendivogius performed successful transmutations of base metals into silver. Mikulaš Lev reported that Sendivogius had white and red powders that he used for curing people and with which he saved the life of Lev's son. Sendivogius had given Lev a little of the white powder, with which he performed a transmutation of mercury into silver himself. Later, at Korálek's laboratory, another transmutation was performed by Sendivogius—this time an iron nail and a screw drawn out of the wall were smeared with liquid and held for a time over the fire. Afterward, they were examined by Jan Kapr and found to be pure silver. The Polish alchemist stressed that he had not prepared the tinctures himself but was given an amount by his “*praeceptor* from Egypt.”<sup>85</sup> This statement was clearly meant to prevent possible attempts by the greedy to learn his secret by force. It shows, however, that Sendivogius performed public transmutations as early as 1595, nearly ten years before he was supposed to have obtained the tincture from Alexander Seton's widow, as reported by Des Noyers.

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83. Martin Stejskal, *The Secrets of Magic Prague*, Prague, 1997, pp. 57–58. I am indebted to Michal Pober for this reference.

84. Vladislav Zadrobílek (ed.), *Opus magnum: Kniha o sakrální geometrii, alchymii, magii, astrologii, kabale a tajných společnostech v Českých zemích*, Prague, 1997, p. 55; *Tractatus de coelo terrestri* quoted in “Aurum superius & inferius. Aurae superioris & inferioris hermeticum” by Christian Adolph Balduin, included in *Miscellanea Curiosa Medico-Physica Academiae Naturae Curiosorum*, vols. 4–5, Frankfurt-Leipzig, 1688, appendix p. 105.

85. Quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Korálek rented Sendivogius an apartment for one hundred thalers in a house he owned at Saint Stephen's street in Prague New Town. There the Polish alchemist organized his own laboratory. At about the same time, Edward Kelley, at whose estate in Jílové Sendivogius also had a house leased to him, was arrested in his cottage in Nový Libeň, where he worked on his alchemical treatises. In November 1596 he was sent to state prison in Most, while his wife was offered nine hundred thalers and a hiding place in a Prague monastery. She refused and moved to Most to be close to her husband. A year later, on November 1, 1597, he attempted to escape but was soon caught and returned to prison, where he died in the presence of his wife and daughter, or rather his stepdaughter, Elizabeth Jane Weston (Westonia).<sup>86</sup> His death was described by Šimon Tadeáš Budek of Falkenberg in his manuscript, containing notes of various current events connected with alchemy at the court of Rudolf II, which was examined by Svátek.<sup>87</sup>

Since Sendivogius lived partly in Jílové while Joan (Jane) Kelley and Westonia stayed in Most, he needed a way to be in touch with them—at least to pay his rent. It is therefore quite possible that he had a hand in Kelley's escape from prison. Could this be the real source of the Seton affair, about which we have no reliable sources? And there is more to it than that. After the death of Edward Kelley, Sendivogius borrowed a large sum of money—5,695 Meissen marks—from Ludvík Korálek and bought the Fumberk estate in Jílové from the widowed Joan Kelley. Thus we have all the elements of the story: an imprisoned Englishman (this nationality was ascribed to the Cosmopolite by both Pierre Des Noyers and Girolamo Pinocci), his escape and death, and Sendivogius's dealings with his widow—all confirmed by primary sources.

The fact that early biographies of various alchemists often follow the same pattern was observed by many serious researchers. John Read wrote:

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86. The relationship between the poet Westonia and Lady Kelley is discussed in Susan E. Bassnett, "Revising a Biography: A New Interpretation of the Life of Elizabeth Jane Weston (Westonia), Based on Her Autobiographical Poem on the Occasion of the Death of Her Mother," *Cahiers Elisabéthains* 37 (1990), pp. 1–8, and Louise Schleiner, "Elizabeth Weston, alchemist's step-daughter and published poet," *Cauda Pavonis*, new series vol. 10, no. 2 (Fall 1991), pp. 8–16.

87. Zachar, *op. cit.*, pp. 424, 255.

At the opening of the seventeenth century, came an even more detailed and circumstantial account of the alchemical odyssey of Alexander Seton, the so-called "Cosmopolite," whose meteor-like career is said to have ended in tragedy at Cracow in 1604. The verisimilar accounts of successful transmutations in the Setonian epic are closely analogous to those occurring in the narratives of van Helmont and Helvetius, later in the seventeenth century; these, in turn, are reminiscent in some respects of the equally circumstantial account (written in the first person) of the much earlier transmutations alleged to have been accomplished by Nicolas Flamel.... All such gold-making episodes are deeply tinged with an element of fantasy, and contribute little to a realistic visualization of the operations and environment of an alchemist at work.<sup>88</sup>

Otakar Zachar wrote a very well researched biography of Sendivogius, which he presented to the Royal Society of Sciences in Prague in 1911 and announced as being at the printers in 1913, but, unfortunately, it seems that it has never been printed.<sup>89</sup> Roman Bugaj tried to find it in Czech libraries and in the collection of Zachar's manuscripts at the National Museum in Prague but without success.<sup>90</sup> In his article about alchemy at the court of Rudolf II, Zachar wrote:

I have elucidated the entangled identities of Seton, Cosmopolite and Scotto, about whom no certain information can be found, in the same biography of M. Sendivogius. I consider them to be compound names used as aliases for other alchemists.<sup>91</sup>

The fame of Sendivogius quickly spread around Prague because of his alchemical knowledge and the transmutations he performed. He soon became the leading figure in the Korálek's circle and most probably also worked with the greatest Czech alchemist, Bavor the Younger Rodovský of Hustiřany (1526–1600?), who lived at Bosáček in Prague New Town at that time and later worked in the castle of Jan Zbynek Zajíc of Hazmburk

88. John Read, *The alchemist in life, literature and art.*, London 1947, p. 26.

89. Zachar, *op. cit.*, p. 244;

90. Roman Bugaj, personal communication.

91. Zachar, p. 245.

in Budyně (d. 1616), to whom he dedicated some treatises.<sup>92</sup> Jan Zajíc was a magnate, a friend and political ally of Vilém of Rožmberk (earlier patron of Rodovský as well as of Dee and Kelley), who also wrote two alchemical treatises himself.<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, it was at his castle that Bartosz Paprocki had lived and written the book dedicated to Piotr Gorajski and Michael Sendivogius, while his other works were dedicated also to Jan Zbynek Zajíc and Vilém of Rožmberk.<sup>94</sup> Roman Bugaj made an in-depth comparative analysis of the manuscript treatises of Rodovský and those of Sendivogius, arriving at the conclusion that the latter was clearly influenced by the former, especially by *Reci filosofké* and his Czech translation of a treatise by Bernard of Treviso, whose vision may have inspired Sendivogius's *Aenigma philosophicum*.<sup>95</sup>

There is, indeed, source confirmation of Sendivogius's stay in Budyně in the Prague court records. Ludvik Korálek wanted him to come back to Prague and sent Jan Kapr of Kaprštejn with a letter and a gold chain as a present. He did not find Sendivogius there, however, since the alchemist "had left with the duke of Braunschweig." It is also recorded that earlier, in 1597, he went to Saxony at the invitation of Duke Christian II—the same who is said to have imprisoned Alexander Seton six years later.<sup>96</sup> At about the same time—in 1598—he was made privy councillor by Emperor Rudolf II, while in the records of 1599 he is styled "*truksas* of His Imperial Majesty" (a person allowed to sit at the table with the emperor) and "*volny pan*" ("free lord" or baron). Both of those titles must have been granted to him by Rudolf II. At the same time, he was also "secretary to the king of Poland." Such close associations with so many monarchs—and there certainly were others—made him one of the most important and influential persons in Prague in the last years of the sixteenth century.

It is usually stated that he performed the famous transmutation in the presence of Rudolf II in 1604 with Seton's powder. Pierre Des Noyers reports that the emperor was so impressed that "he ordered a marble

92. Otakar Zachar, "Z dějin alchymie v Čechách," *Časopis Musea Království Českého*, 73, 1899, p. 244. On Bavor Rodovský see *ibid. passim*, and also Vladimír Kuncitř, "Alchymie v Česých zemích" in Vladislav Zadrobílek, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–62 (English translation on p. 279 of the same).

93. Now in the library of the National Museum in Prague.

94. Karel Krejci, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

95. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, pp. 84, 214–215, 233.

96. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

plaque to be set into the wall of the room where the experiment was conducted, with the following words engraved on it: *Faciat hoc quispiam alius / quod fecit Sendivogius Polonus*.<sup>97</sup> This line translates as: Let anyone else do / What Sendivogius the Pole has done.

Des Noyers also says that he saw it still in place in 1650, even though this statement undermines the logic of his account. If the Seton story had been true, either Rudolf II or the succeeding emperors would have found out the truth (especially since Des Noyers could learn about it during his short stay in Prague) and removed it. Not only did they not do so, but they continued to esteem Sendivogius and use his services. Roman Bugaj tried to find out what had happened to that plaque while doing research on Sendivogius in Prague in 1962 and 1963, but no one knew anything. He concluded that it must have been removed in 1757, placed along with other objects from Rudolf's collection in the basements of the castle, and thrown into the Stag Moat in 1782, where it may still be.<sup>98</sup>

The known facts clearly indicate that the transmutation in the Prague Castle must have taken place between 1595 and 1598, which explains the great admiration for Michael Sendivogius expressed by everyone—from the members of Korálek's circle through Paprocki and other poets to the magnates and princes interested in alchemy and Rudolf II himself. That admiration was not expressed with words only. When Sendivogius did not manage to pay his debt back to Korálek in the course of two years (as initially agreed), Piotr Gorajski wanted to pay the remaining two thousand Meissen marks for him, but Korálek refused, saying that he could wait. After his death, when Korálek's family demanded the money at court, it was Jan Zbynek Zajíc who paid it immediately so that Sendivogius could be set free and return to his laboratory.<sup>99</sup> It was at the same proceeding in 1599 that Oswald Croll appeared as a witness to defend Sendivogius against the accusations of poisoning Korálek. He testified that after everyone—including himself—had left Korálek as an incurable case (actually, he was an alcoholic), "the Polish doctor" stayed with him to the end and was very helpful to him in his last moments.<sup>100</sup>

Korálek's alchemical circle with Rodovský, Sendivogius, and Croll (who

97. Jacques Sadoul, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

98. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

99. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, pp. 85, 96.

100. The full text of Croll's testimony is quoted in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–94.

lived in Prague from 1593 until his death in 1609), and possibly Heinrich Khunrath (the first edition of his *Amphitheatrum* was published in Prague in 1598), may be seen as the nucleus of the informal "Prague Alchemical Society," later joined by Michael Maier (who was a courtier of Rudolf II from before 1600 until 1601 and then his physician from 1608 till the emperor's death in 1612), Martin Ruland the Elder (also appointed Rudolf's physician in 1607), Cornelis Drebbel (invited to Prague in 1610, which he left in 1612 to return later to tutor Emperor Ferdinand II's sons), and the young Daniel Stolcius. All of those esteemed alchemical authors admired Sendivogius as their master and a true adept, whose wish to remain unknown was carefully observed by them.

It may be added to what has already been said that Martin Ruland the Elder published one of the earliest editions of *Cosmopolitani novum lumen chymicum* in Frankfurt ("curis Ruhlandi apud Palthenium 1606"), without revealing his true identity and certainly with his approval.<sup>101</sup> The contacts of Drebbel with Sendivogius were presented by Zbigniew Szydło in his book, where he also discusses at length the Polish alchemist's theory from the chemical point of view as well as its influence on the history of science.<sup>102</sup> Edward Kelley's stepdaughter Elizabeth Jane Weston, or Westonia, appears to have been their "muse"—her poem dedicated to Oswald Croll is included in Croll's *Basilica chymica* (1609).

We have thus returned to early seventeenth-century Prague with a much better understanding—supported by primary sources—of the position Michael Sendivogius held in the alchemical milieu there, which proves to be quite different from what most books in English tell us. Unfortunately, the old story is still copied not only by popular or "inspired" books of passing interest but also by such scholarly and well-researched works as *The Golden Game* by Stanislas Klossowski de Rola. This truly magnificent book will certainly be one of the most important reference works for future generations of alchemical scholars; for this reason it is so much more a pity that it will fix the unjust and historically wrong picture of Sendivogius.<sup>103</sup> The author further amplifies his justification for including that story by the following statement about the twelfth adept in Maier's *Symbola aureae mensae*:

101. The bibliography of Sendivogius's works in Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

102. Zbigniew Szydło, *op. cit.*

103. Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

The roster is ironically completed by the presence of an Anonymous Sarmatian. The latter's anonymity has not deterred the artist from providing us with two likenesses; the one on the title-page differs in every way from the other in the text.<sup>104</sup>

This opinion is highly exaggerated, not to say wrong, as the two likenesses are quite similar and obviously depict the same person. Moreover, they are the most naturalistic of the whole set of twelve. There exist two other portraits of Michael Sendivogius. One is the frontispiece to the Nuremberg edition of *Novum lumen chymicum* of 1766, which was engraved by J. C. Reinsperger in 1763 from an oil painting in the bedroom of "a certain prince of the Holy Roman Empire" and represents a true effigy of "*Nobilis illius poloni et praeclari philosophi hermetici Michaelis Sendivogij*."<sup>105</sup> The other one was discovered by Roman Bugaj in the library of Warsaw University; it is a line drawing executed about 1630 that shows Sendivogius in old age.<sup>106</sup> Even though all those portraits were produced at different times and in different artistic techniques, certain similarities of facial features are clearly discernible.



Portrait of Michael Sendivogius (at left) in his late years (from a manuscript in the University Library in Warsaw). Portrait of Michael Sendivogius (at right) engraved from an oil painting (frontispiece in *Michaelis Sendivogii Novum lumen chemicum aus dem Brunnen der Natur durch handangelegte Erfahrung bewiesen...*, Nuremberg, 1766).

104. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

105. *Michaelis Sendivogii Novum lumen chemicum aus dem Brunnen der Natur durch handangelegte Erfahrung bewiesen...*, Nuremberg, 1766, frontispiece caption.

106. Roman Bugaj, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

What I have presented so far is just a small fragment of what is known about Michael Sendivogius and is directly relevant to his life and position in Rudolfine Prague. I have not dealt with his earlier extensive journeys to many European universities, his diplomatic missions to Constantinople and Moscow, his work as a mining engineer and manager for Mikołaj Wolski in Poland and for emperor Ferdinand II in Silesia, the other transmutations he performed (including the famous one in the presence of King Sigismund III Vasa of Poland), his visits at the courts of several German princes, his correspondence with various alchemists (including Johann Rudolph Glauber), and much more. I have summarized these in English elsewhere, and further details can be found in Roman Bugaj's monograph of 1968, which remains the most comprehensive and definitive work on the life of Michael Sendivogius.<sup>107</sup> The same scholar also translated Sendivogius's treatises into Polish and edited them with extensive introduction and commentary.<sup>108</sup> What remains to be discussed here, however, is the influence of the Polish alchemical philosopher on the Rosicrucian movement—both in the narrow sense of the manifestos and in the wider perspective of the intellectual current called by recent scholarship “the Rosicrucian Enlightenment.”<sup>109</sup>

Frances Yates attempted to show that Rosicrucianism should be seen “as a movement ultimately stemming from John Dee.”<sup>110</sup> And yet at the same time she says that “Paracelsist physicians like Fludd, Maier, Croll, represent the thought of the movement” and that “Stolcius provides a link between the alchemical emblem movement around Maier and the Bohemian side of the movement that came to so disastrous an end in 1620.”<sup>111</sup> As we have seen, all of those major representatives of alchemical Rosicrucianism (with the exception of Fludd, whose interest in alchemy was rather marginal) as well as Johann Daniel Mylius, whom Yates calls “a disciple of Maier,” pointed to Michael Sendivogius as the most celebrated

107. Rafał T. Prinke, “Michael Sendivogius: Adept or Impostor?,” *Hermetic Journal*, 15 (1981), pp. 17–24.

108. Michał Sędziwój, *Traktat o kamieniu filozoficznym*, translated and edited by Roman Bugaj, Warsaw, 1971.

109. See also Rafał T. Prinke, “Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz: The Unexpected Possibilities,” *Hermetic Journal*, 1990, pp. 72–98 (also available at Adam McLean's Web site at <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/sendi.html>).

110. Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 222, 89.



philosopher of their time, while they hardly—if ever—referred to John Dee, whose Continental mission proved to be a total failure.<sup>112</sup>

One of the major arguments put forward by Yates to defend her thesis was the fact that *Consideratio brevis*, by Philippus à Gabella, to which the *Confessio* was merely an addition or continuation, was based on Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica* (actually quoting verbatim from it). As Yates says:

The Dee-inspired *Consideratio Brevis*, and its prayer, seems absolutely assimilated to the Rosicrucian manifesto, as an integral part of it, as though explaining that the “more secret philosophy” behind the Rosicrucian movement was the philosophy of John Dee, as expounded in his *Monas hieroglyphica*.<sup>113</sup>

Only a part of this work, however, is based on Dee's *Monas*, while the remainder is purely alchemical and is clearly based on Sendivogius's *De lapide philosophorum*. There are numerous statements either taken directly from it or summarizing its fragments or saying the same things in different words. For instance, the piece in the last paragraph of the fifth chapter beginning “If Hermes, the father of philosophy, were to be brought back to life today ...” is taken from the second page of the First Treatise, while the description of the working of nature summarizes the teachings of Sendivogius. Moreover, the explanations about mercury and its role in nature set forth in the sixth chapter show a deep understanding of Sendivogius's theories on “our water that does not wet hands” referred to many times in *De lapide philosophorum*.<sup>114</sup>

There is, however, one fragment quoted verbatim—that is the last paragraph of chapter six, which comes from the fifth treatise with this opening statement added: “As I have often told my sons of knowledge and wisdom...” We have here a quotation introduced in the first person with Sendivogius's favorite form of address to his readers and fellow alchemists—“sons of knowledge and wisdom.” The identity of Philippus à Gabella is totally unknown but Frances Yates suggests it must be a pseudonym referring to “cabala.” Perhaps it stands for the “Cabala of Philosophers,” which

112. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

114. Christopher Atton's translation of *Consideratio brevis* was published in *Hermetic Journal*, 1989, pp. 79–97.

is the name of the society mentioned in Sendivogius's *Philosophical Letters*, which I discuss later. Could the whole text have been written by Sendivogius himself? It is not quite impossible—he had been acquainted with Dee's philosophy through his association with Edward Kelley in Prague, he certainly knew *Monas hieroglyphica* from the imperial library there, and he may have even met Dee personally in Cracow or in England during his studies at Cambridge.

One of the key reformatory statements in the *Fama* is the following:

Howbeit we know after a time there will now be a general reformation, both of divine and human things, according to our desire and the expectation of others. For it is fitting, that before the rising of the sun, there should appear and break forth Aurora, or some clearness, or divine light in the sky...

In *Politia* we acknowledge the Roman Empire and *Quartam Monarchiam* for our Christian head; albeit we know what alterations be at hand, and would fain impart the same with all our hearts to other godly learned men... we shall help with secret aid this so good a cause, as God shall permit or hinder us.<sup>115</sup>

This passage was clearly inspired by the expectation of profound changes that was felt throughout Europe and gave rise to a number of utopian visions of a perfect society, but in this case there is a striking similarity to the ideas taught by Heliocantharus Borealis, or Michael Sendivogius, so admired by John French in his *Art of Distillation*. The Polish alchemist himself described his doctrine briefly in *Treatise on Sulphur* (first published in Cologne 1613):

The times are at hand when many secrets of Nature will be revealed to men. The Fourth or Northern Monarchy is about to be established; a happy age is coming; enlightenment, the Mother of Sciences, will soon appear; a brighter Sun than in any of the preceding three Monarchies will rise and reveal more hidden secrets. This Monarchy (as the ancients foretold) God's Omnipotence will found by the hand of a prince enriched with all virtues who, it is said, has already appeared in this present age. In this our northern region we see a prince of uncommon

115. Thomas Vaughan's translation of 1652, in Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

wisdom and valor, whom no king can surpass in victories or in love of men and God.

There is no doubt that in this Monarchy God will reveal to us more secrets of Nature than took place in the pagan darkness or under the rule of tyrants. Philosophers used to describe these Monarchies not according to their powers but by their placement and the parts of the world they cover. On the first place they place the Eastern, then the Southern, then the Western and finally the Northern and last one that is expected in these countries and about which I will speak at length in my "Harmonia."

In this Northern coming polar Monarchy (as the Psalmist says) mercy and truth will meet together, peace and justice will kiss each other, truth will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from heaven. There will be one Shepherd and one fold, and knowledge will be the common property of all without envy. I look forward to all this with longing.<sup>116</sup>

He must have taught it well before 1609, when Oswald Croll called him *Heliocantharus Borealis*, and the similarity to the views expressed by the author or authors of the *Fama* is evident. The idea of the Fourth Monarchy can be traced to the biblical vision of Daniel and was quite popular among Renaissance prophetic writers, including Paracelsus. Their interpretation was, however, catastrophic, quite different from the utopian vision of Sendivogius and the *Fama*. But we find—quite unexpectedly—that Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) in his treatises on the *stella nova* of 1572, and the comet of 1577, predicted great changes in Northern Europe that would precede "major reforms of both spiritual and lay kingdom." He was convinced that the great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Aries in 1603 would inaugurate the age "of greater happiness and glory than had ever been experienced in the earlier times."<sup>117</sup> These prophecies were repeated in his *Astronomiae*

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116. The English version of this fragment as published by Arthur Edward Waite in *The Hermetic Museum* (reprinted by Llanerch Enterprises in 1989) is slightly abridged. This quotation is based on the 1616 Cologne edition via Roman Bugaj's Polish translation in his edition of the collected works of Sendivogius.

117. Charles Webster, *Od Paracelsusa do Newtona. Magia i powstanie nowożytnej nauki*, Warsaw, 1992, pp. 37–38 (Polish edition of *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science*, Cambridge, 1982; quotations retranslated from Polish).

*instauratae progymnasmata* (1602) written in Prague, where he stayed from 1599 until his death in 1601. Since Brahe was also a Paracelsian, interested in chemistry and medicine, Sendivogius certainly was in contact with him, and that was the direct source of his idea of the "Northern Monarchy."<sup>118</sup> The treatise on *Harmony*, to which Sendivogius refers, was identified by Roman Bugaj as one published by Jacques Nuysement in Paris in 1618 and subsequently attributed to him.<sup>119</sup> It was also published in English (1657 and 1658) in the translation by Robert Turner, but I have not been able to gain access to it yet.

It is now quite certain that the Rosicrucian manifestos were composed about 1610 at the University of Tübingen in the circle of the learned doctor Tobias Hess (1568–1614). To this group belonged young Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), the author of the *Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1616)—later an esteemed Lutheran theologian and utopian writer—and Christoph Besold (1577–1638), a professor and political philosopher with chiliastic beliefs.<sup>120</sup> According to the most recent scholarship, these three persons were the authors of the manifestos.<sup>121</sup> It should be noted that Hess was of the same age as Sendivogius and came from Nuremberg, and we have Andreae's testimony that he was interested in alchemy, chiliastic prophecies, and "Naometry."<sup>122</sup> This last refers to *Naometria*, an apocalyptic-prophetic book (unpublished) written by Simon Studion at the court of Frederick, duke of Württemberg, in Stuttgart, which was completed in 1604. It may be remembered that Michael Sendivogius corresponded with Duke Frederick and visited his court in 1605–1606.

Another important visit that Sendivogius made was to Marburg in or shortly before 1616. He visited the university and the laboratory of Johann Hartmann (1568–1631), the famous Paracelsian who was made "professor of chymiatry" by Moritz, landgrave of Hesse, in 1609. His students were taught to prepare iatrochemical medicines, as described in *Basilica chymica*

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118. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

119. Roman Bugaj, personal communication. He is preparing a scholarly edition of this treatise in Polish.

120. Hans Schick, *op. cit.*, and most later researchers.

121. Carlos Gilly, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

122. Johann Valentin Andreae, *Memorialia, benevolentium honori, amori et condolentiae data*, Strasburg, 1619. Quoted in Arthur Edward Waite, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

by Oswald Croll, the old friend of Sendivogius. Among the students in 1615–1616 there was one Szymon Batkowski who may be the same as Jan Budowski, on whose account the German *Vita Sendivogii Poloni* was based.<sup>123</sup> The alchemist must have been invited by the landgrave Moritz, who was greatly interested in alchemy, and spent some time at his court.<sup>124</sup> The duke's court physician at that time was Michael Maier, who had known Sendivogius very well from his Prague years and made him the last of the twelve greatest adepts in his *Symbola aureae mensae* published in 1617. It is thus possible that the transmutations he had witnessed were performed by Sendivogius at the court in Kassel during that visit.

But it was not only Maier who was there. The other most important representative of the emblematic alchemy of the Rosicrucian type—Johann Daniel Mylius—was the son-in-law of Hartmann and another physician of Landgrave Moritz.<sup>125</sup> It was also at Kassel that *Fama fraternitatis* was first published in 1614, printed by Wilhelm Wessel. The permission for running his business—issued to Wessel by Landgrave Moritz in 1594—stated that he could print only those texts handed to him by the duke and was obliged to keep all secrets connected with them.<sup>126</sup> Inviting Michael Sendivogius shortly afterward (we do not know exactly when he arrived at Kassel) may have been an attempt on the part of Moritz of Hesse, Michael Maier, and Johann Daniel Mylius to form a fraternity along the lines described in the *Fama* and *Confessio*, in which the Twelfth Adept would be an esteemed member.

These parallels, though interesting, do not provide tangible proof of Sendivogius's involvement in or influence on the original Rosicrucian manifestos. The prophecies about the imminent coming of a great reformation were so widespread that they may be seen as a *signum temporis* rather than ascribed to any particular thinker (actually, they can be traced

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123. Roman Bugaj, pp. 138–141.

124. The voluminous correspondence of Moritz with alchemists is preserved. I have not been able to consult the recent research on this in Bruce T. Moran, "The Alchemical World of the German Court: Occult Philosophy and Chemical Medicine in the Circle of Moritz of Hessen," *Sudhoffs Archiv*, Stuttgart, 1991.

125. Ron Heisler, "The Forgotten English Roots of Rosicrucianism," *Hermetic Journal*, 1992. The electronic copy is on Adam McLean's Web site at [http://www.levity.com/alchemy/h\\_ros.html](http://www.levity.com/alchemy/h_ros.html).

126. Roland Edighoffer, *Róźokrzyżowcy*, Warsaw, 1998, p. 95 (Polish edition of *Les Rose-Croix*).

to Paracelsus).<sup>127</sup> Similarly, the idea of a secret society of the learned can be traced to the Italian Academy of Secrets (*Accademia dei Segreti*), founded about 1560 in the house of Giambattista della Porta in Naples.<sup>128</sup> The Rosicrucian Brotherhood of the manifestos can be seen as just one of many similar societies and fraternities that quickly became the generic term for "a certain style of thinking" (to use the phrase of Frances Yates) and a certain type of learned society.

In this wider sense the Rosicrucianism of Michael Sendivogius is perhaps best seen in his idea of a secret hermetic society codified in *Statutes of the Society of Unknown Philosophers*. This little-known work was published only once, in 1691 in the French edition of the collected works attributed to the Cosmopolite, though earlier manuscript versions in Latin are known to exist.<sup>129</sup> The *Philosophical Letters* of Sendivogius were addressed to a "newly accepted member of the Society of the Cabala of Unknown Philosophers" and mention the Latin statutes sent to him. The French version was recently translated into English and published with commentary by Zbigniew Szydło.<sup>130</sup> Interestingly, the 1791 English translation of the *Philosophical Letters* by Ebenezer Sibly was entitled *Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Rosey Crucian Society*, while *Bibliotheca Esoterica Catalogue* (1941) calls him "Grand Master of the Rosy Cross and founder of the alchemical branch of the Rosicrucians that was called the 'Society of Unknown Philosophers.'" <sup>131</sup> Both are examples of the extended use of the term advocated by Frances Yates.

In comparison with the *Fama* and *Confessio*, the *Statutes* are much less provoking and do not contain any mythical or literary fiction or any apocalyptic prophecies. It is a quite sober scheme of a society that would promote synchronized advancement of learning within the field of alchemy

127. They are discussed by Charles Webster, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–52.

128. Charles Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

129. Bibliothèque de Carpentras MS 288; Wellcome Institute MS 3560; British Library MS Sloane 1724; MS Sloane 3644.

130. Zbigniew Szydło, "Michael Sendivogius and the *Statuts des Philosophes Inconnus*," *Hermetic Journal*, 1992, pp. 72–91. See also the same author's *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands*, pp. 222–236, and discussion in text.

131. Ron. Charles Hogart, *Alchemy: A Comprehensive Bibliography of the Manly P. Hall Collection of Books and Manuscripts*, Los Angeles, 1986, p.297. Another copy is Glasgow University Library MS Ferguson 25, which was transcribed by Justin von Bujdoss and published by Adam McLean at <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/send10.html>; quote by Zbigniew Szydło, *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.



# STATUTS

*Des Philosophes inconnus.*

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## CHAPITRE I.

*Division de toute la Compagnie.*

### Article I.

*De quel país doivent être les Affociés.*

Title page of the *Statutes of the Society of Unknown Philosophers*  
composed by Michael Sendivogius.

through sharing of experience and knowledge. The *Philosophical Letters* were, in fact, intended as an example of the kind of information exchange that would take place among the members of the society. Sendivogius explains in the preface to the *Statutes* that such a secret society was necessary because otherwise nothing could be achieved. Members should be free and independent of any obligations, so that no one could force them to be unfaithful to the society. This means exclusion of members of monastic orders, because they took oaths of obedience, and of kings and princes, since they are motivated by ambition. The poor, on the other hand, should not be admitted because they would have no financial means to carry out the Great Work. The proposed organizational structure of the society, admission procedure, means of communication between members, occasional meetings, and precautions aimed at keeping the secrets from the outer world are all perfectly sensible within the philosophical context of the period.

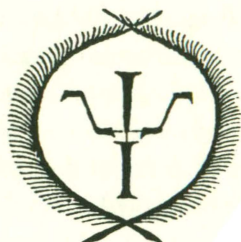
To the *Statutes* is appended the "Seal or Hieroglyph of Unknown Philosophers" with an interpretation very reminiscent of John Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica*. The seal is the trident of the "Neptune of our parable, which contains in abbreviated form the entire theory and practice of the Hermetic Science," and all elements of it are treated at length in a few pages.<sup>132</sup> The parable referred to is obviously the *Parabola seu aenigma philosophicum*,

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132. Zbigniew Szydło, "Michael Sendivogius and the *Statuts des Philosophes Inconnus*," *op. cit.*, p. 89.

## SOMMAIRE ABREGE

De tout ce qui est contenu dans  
ces Lettres, renfermé dans un  
Sceau ou Hierogliffe de la So-  
ciété des Philosophes inconnus.



Hieroglyphic seal of the Society of Unknown Philosophers, bringing together the teachings of John Dee's *Monas hieroglyphica* and Michael Sendivogius's *Parabola seu aenigma philosophicum*.

which forms a part of *Novum lumen chymicum* and in which Neptune is the main character.

All such societies that promoted general reformation of the whole world—of religion, human mentality, and scientific research—eventually led to the foundation of the Royal Society (1660) and Académie des Sciences (1666), as discussed by Frances Yates. One of the main influences in its developing phase was the circle of intellectuals formed around Samuel Hartlib (about 1600–1662) in London. He came to England in 1628 from his home town of Elbing in Poland and was later joined by Jan Ámos Komenský (Comenius) (1592–1670), arriving from Poland in 1641, and others in promoting the advancement of learning. Among the topics discussed by them through extensive correspondence, there was Michael Sendivogius and his works.<sup>133</sup> One of the most interesting references in the *Hartlib Papers* is that in 1631 Cyprian Kinner—a friend of Hartlib and Comenius—refused invitations to become the rector of the Racovian Academy (run by Polish Brethren, or Socinians) and the Klausenburg school in order to accept that from “*celeberrimo barone Michaelae Sendivogio*” to the imperial court in Prague. He performed

133. *Hartlib Papers* CD-ROM, *op. cit.*



services for Sendivogius there and was ennobled at his request by the emperor Ferdinand II in 1633.<sup>134</sup>

During Comenius's first stay in Poland (1625–1641), his main patrons were Rafał Leszczyński and his son-in-law Zbigniew Gorajski (ca. 1590–1655), the son of Adam and nephew of Piotr, the two brothers with whom Sendivogius first arrived in Prague. One of his greatest friends was Jan Jonston (1603–1675), a teacher at the Leszno gymnasium, of which Comenius was the rector; a physician of the Leszczyński family; and famous polyhistor. He was born of Scottish immigrant parents in Poland and attempted to create a monumental synthesis of all knowledge, cooperating with Comenius along pansophic lines. Many of his books were illustrated with copper plate engravings by Matthaeus Merian. In 1630 he stayed with Robert Fludd (1574–1637) in London for several months before going to Cambridge, and he also contacted Johannes Hunnyades, the Hungarian alchemist.<sup>135</sup>



Portrait of John Jonston.

134. G. H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib's Papers*, London, 1947, p. 384. I am grateful to Ron Heisler for bringing this reference to my attention. See also *Hartlib Papers* CD-ROM, *op. cit.*

135. Tadeusz Bilikiewicz, *Jan Jonston (1603–1675): Żywot i działalność lekarska*, Warsaw, 1931, p. 39.

The meaning of this cordial relationship with Fludd is further strengthened by a rare, ephemeral print with poems written by Jonston's friends in 1637 to celebrate his marriage. The author of the first piece in the collection is "*Daniel Stolcius de Stolcenberg, Philos. et Med. Hermeticus. P.L.C.*"—the same who revealed the identity of "Anonymous the Sarmatian," cited by Michael Maier.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, Jonston was one of the doctors who examined Christina Poniatova, whose prophecies were later published by Comenius in *Lux in tenebris* (1657), thought by Frances Yates to be of great importance.<sup>137</sup>

In his medical works Jan Jonston was a follower of Paracelsus and often mentions Oswald Croll and Johann Hartmann of Marburg. In one of his most famous works—*Naturae constantia* (1632), also published in England as *An History of the Constancy of Nature ... by John Jonston of Poland* (1657)—he lists briefly the great alchemists of earlier times, including Paracelsus and his followers "*Suchteno, Dorneo, Thurnheusero, Severino, et Crollio.*"<sup>138</sup> Then, stressing the necessity of the experimental approach to physics expounded in the works of Francis Bacon, he mentions "many histories about transmutations of other metals into gold by Paracelsus, Kelley and Seton."<sup>139</sup> The lack of any mention of Michael Sendivogius is quite striking in a work by a Polish friend of Daniel Stolcius.

At the end of the next paragraph, however, after discussing the possibility of metallic transmutation, he makes a mysterious remark: "I also believe that everyone knows what a certain Polish doctor has done for vivifying planets." There can be no doubt at all that the Polish doctor was Michael Sendivogius, who was still alive at that time. Interestingly, in the same year, Jan Jonston wrote a historical treatise entitled *De quatuor Monarchiis*. The only conclusion we can draw is that this "second-generation Rosicrucian" honored the great alchemist's wish expressed in *Novum lumen chymicum*, as did Oswald Croll and Michael Maier before him:

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136. *Honori solennitatieque nuptiali... Dn. Johannis Jonstoni... cum... Christina Hortensia... Votiva amicorum acclamatio*, Leszno, 1637.

137. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–159.

138. Jan Jonston, *Naturae constantia*, Amsterdam, 1632, p. 77.

139. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

If you ask who I am: I am Cosmopolita, citizen of the world. If you know me and wish to be good and honourable men, keep my name a secret. If you do not know me, forbear to enquire after my name.<sup>140</sup>

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### *Post Scriptum*

After this article had been typeset, I became aware of the newly published book *Alchemie: Lexikon einer hermetischen Wissenschaft* edited by Claus Priesner and Karin Figala (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1998). It is a very comprehensive summary of current research on alchemy by many leading scholars. The entry on Alexander Seton (pp. 335–336) was written by Julian Paulus, who established that the Scottish alchemist died shortly before September, 1606, in his own house in Basel. Paulus found a letter from Johannes Hartmann, the professor of “chymiatry” from Marburg, to the alchemist Joseph Duchesne (Quercetanus). He states there that he had been informed about Seton’s death by professor Jacob Zwinger from Basel. He also states that the whole story about Seton’s imprisonment by Christian II of Saxony and his escape with the help of Sendivogius is a later invention, as are many other legends connected with the Scotsman’s name.

This important discovery confirms my own hypothesis that the story of Seton’s escape and Sendivogius’s dealings with his widow were distorted reminiscences of Seton’s contacts with Edward Kelley and the purchase of land from the Englishman’s widow. It should also end speculations about the authorship of *A new light of alchymie* (*Novum lumen chymicum*) and other treatises written by Michael Sendivogius.

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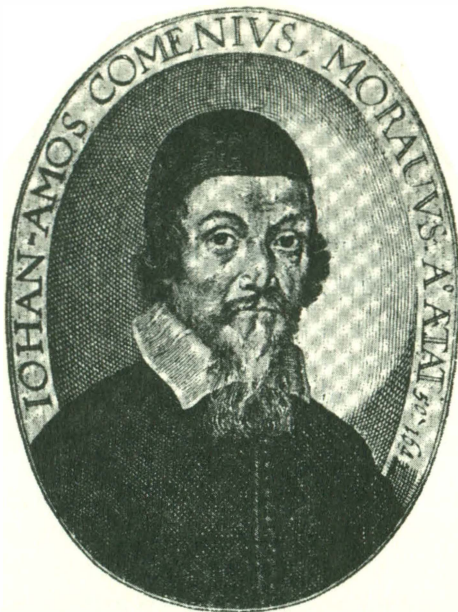
140. *The New Chemical Light*, translation from *Concerning the Secrets of Alchemy and Other Tracts from the Hermetic Museum*, Llanerch Enterprises 1989, p. 128. Also on Adam McLean’s Web site at <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/newchem2.html>.

7.

*The Rosicrucian  
Afterglow*

*The Life and Influence of Comenius*

CLARE GOODRICK-CLARKE



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'See, here an Exile' who to serve his God,  
Hath sharply tasted of proud Parish-Rod,  
Whose learning, Piety, & true worth, being knowne  
To all the world, makes all the world his owne

John Amos Comenius, 1667.



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HIS GATHERING in Bohemia provides an opportunity to celebrate an original and brilliant thinker and to bring the extraordinary life of one of the giants of Czech history to the attention of a new, open-minded generation. Jan Amos Comenius was a man who profoundly influenced the life of his times and his shadow still falls across our own times—although it is often unrecognized. In Cesky Krumlov we have a further link with Comenius: this little town is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as an exceptional historical monument of world cultural importance. UNESCO itself is a legacy of Comenius's ideal, and perhaps it is in this organization that Comenius's vision of a worldwide society and the evolution of a universal culture may be said to have been most fully realized.

Comenius's legacy is great. Without knowing even his name, most people who have been through secondary education have benefited from his life. He was the first person to include geography and the natural sciences in the school curriculum and the first to insist that education should begin in infancy and be available equally to all. He believed that education should include drawing, botany, foreign languages, physical training, and lessons in manual dexterity. He believed everyone should learn a skill by means of which to earn a living. Most important of all, he thought that learning should be fun and that it should be a means of drawing out an individual's maximum potential. And yet he himself hated school, was regularly beaten, and came late to learning.

In his own time he was well known throughout Europe—so much so that he was invited by the governments of Sweden, France, Holland, and Hungary to reform their country's educational systems. In England, a petition

on education signed by fifteen thousand Londoners finally persuaded the government to invite him to come and reform the English educational system too. Sadly, the outbreak of the Civil War prevented him from realizing those plans. His theories of how people learn, however, continue to influence education throughout the world.

He was a dedicated teacher who knew firsthand the strengths and practical limitations of his theories because he taught all his life. As an adult, he was a keen student, too, but people who did not like his views burned down his library. He built it up again, collecting books and manuscripts in his search for comprehensive knowledge. The library was burned down again. He was hounded into exile, living for a time in a cave beside the river at Brandeis, and was later driven out of his country altogether—the familiar fate of many an active dissident.

Who was Comenius? He was a priest and a mystic, a historian, a philosopher and pansophist, a brilliant linguist, and a cartographer. But there was nothing retiring about him—far from it. He married three times, corresponded with some of the greatest minds of his day, traveled widely, and was able to make himself at home in any of the six countries in which he lived. He knew his way around Europe and was the first person to make a map of his own native country. He even predicted that there would one day be a “United States” of Europe.

He was also a writer, whose success would be widely envied, even by today’s standards. One book was such an immediate success that it was translated into twelve European languages; within ten years of publication it was also available in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Mongolian. The book was a teaching manual with a revolutionary method of learning foreign languages; it remained in use for two centuries, and modern language teaching methods are derived from it.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Generations of language students have been grateful to Comenius’s practical approach to the learning of languages and his methods are still the preferred ones today: the study of language by means of the study of things. The nineteenth century publisher, Duden, took *Orbis Pictus* as his model for an illustrated dictionary and encyclopedias, and this concept has remained the mainstay of German language publishing. The last few years have seen a new collaboration between Duden and Oxford University Press to create universal dictionaries and encyclopedias for foreign languages including Hungarian and other languages of the former Eastern bloc. Once again one sees Comenius’s revived pansophy in action today. It is appropriate that Comenius has often been described as “a teacher of the nations.”

Comenius believed that children could learn more quickly from pictures than from words alone, and so he invented children's picture books. But his finest book, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, is an allegory of life—written more than sixty years before John Bunyan composed his masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The book is a world classic of seventeenth-century prose.

Scholars have tended to deride his interest in pansophy, astrology, mediumship, and the prediction of future events as being an unworthy lapse from his more tangible and recognizable achievements. However, in a society more appreciative of such interests and more willing to suspend judgment, these aspects of his character also merit a little exploration.

Jan Ámos Komenský (1592–1670), better known in the West as Comenius, was born in Bohemia four hundred years ago; studied in Germany at the universities of Herborn and Heidelberg; lived in Poland, England, and Sweden; and died at seventy-eight years of age in Amsterdam. Through his visit to England in 1641, Comenius almost certainly influenced the founders of the Royal Society, and some scholars have claimed he acted as a link between Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry. The reputation of Comenius in the Czech lands, Poland, Sweden, and the Netherlands, where he made his home until his death, still stands high. There are monuments to him at his birthplace, Uherský Brod in Moravia; at Waldstein Palace in Prague, which houses the museum dedicated to his life and works; at Fulnek, where he lived and taught until defeat by the imperial forces at the Battle of the White Mountain drove him into hiding; and at Brandeis, where, living in a cave in fear for his life, a forlorn and broken figure and still grieving for the loss of his wife and two children as a result of the war, he nevertheless found the spiritual resilience to compose his most cherished work, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*.

In any age, Comenius would be a remarkable figure for the sheer scale and breadth of his output, the practical nature of his work, his mystical gifts, and his indomitable spirit in the teeth of plague, war, privation, and religious persecution. He was well acquainted with grief, having been orphaned early in life. His first wife died of plague and then both of his children. His second wife also died, leaving him with four young children. Several times his property was seized, and his home and library were burned to the ground. He spent more than half his life in exile. Comenius



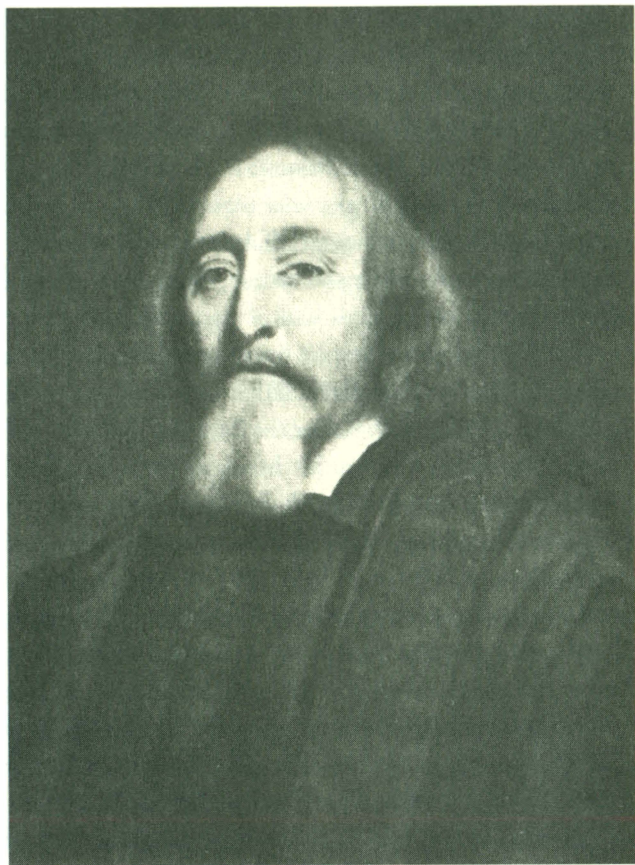
towered over the tragic circumstances of his life, and, though subjected to stresses such as few people could tolerate, he managed to publish nearly a hundred works during his lifetime (not including the many re-editions of his work). He left behind some twenty unpublished manuscripts, many of them still unpublished even today.

Comenius was the most democratic educator of his time. He believed in education for all—rich and poor, male and female—on the ground that education could renew human life. Once ignorance and the moral degeneration that stems from it are removed by education, the way is clear for world peace. This attitude toward education informs all Protestant and humanist thinking, and many of these ideas were articulated by Erasmus a century before Comenius. But the importance of Comenius's contribution lies in his extremely practical methods. He believed that, to be effective and memorable, learning should be fun. The discipline of interest should replace the discipline of coercion and learning by rote. In his view, education is not just for passing examinations; education is for life. His system of education still looks "modern," most notably in the emphasis he placed on preschool, kindergarten education up to the age of six.

Comenius was very much a man of his time and place and so I will begin with a brief sketch of his life and the history of these Czech lands (known historically as Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia).

*The geographical and historical background  
and a brief sketch of Comenius's life*

The Hradcany was one of the first and largest princely residences of Europe, for both emperors Charles IV and Rudolf II made their courts in Prague. This not just because it is a beautiful country; it is also the heart of Europe—literally a crossroads of cultures: the Amber and Salt roads intersect at Prague. Encircled by the German-speaking lands to the north and west, Poland and Russia to the East, and Hungary in the south, the Czech lands are linked to the Baltic by the Oder river system, to the Black Sea by the Danube, and to the North Sea by the great artery of the Elbe–Moldau river systems.



*Comenius (Jan Ámos Komenský)*  
Portrait ascribed to Juriaan Overn.

Strategically, the Czech lands are key. To the territorially acquisitive, they offer a gateway to the Slavonic east as well as routes south to the Balkans and Adriatic and the lands of southeastern Europe. Bismarck once said that the ruler of Bohemia was the ruler of Europe. Hitler thought so, too, and the Munich Pact of 1938 led to a German bid for hegemony that exploded in the partition of Europe and Russian domination in the east.

The Czech people were perhaps the first on the mainland of Europe to discover a sense of national consciousness, which has never left them. Under the domination of the Holy Roman Empire and its successors,

however, they were forced to think of themselves in a European context. Their country is small, its borders dictated largely by physical geography. They have been surrounded on all sides by the competing interests of those who have sought to oppress and exploit their national substance for upward of a thousand years. From an early stage, the Czechs realized that material and military strength alone could not be the sum of their defences.

Tolerance, perseverance, moral steadfastness, and spiritual maturity have also had a place in their defensive armory. As a result, the Czech people have shown Europe the way as one of the most progressive in their respect for individual freedoms, despite living under the domination of the Holy Roman and Austrian empires for three hundred years—from 1620, when the kingdom of Bohemia fell after the Battle of the White Mountain, until the first Czech republic. Tomáš Masaryk (president) and Edvard Beneš (foreign minister) were acting out of the same deep urge for religious and individual freedom as Jan Hus and Comenius when they founded the first Czech republic in 1918.

That freedom was short-lived, and the Czechs found themselves abandoned in 1938 just as they had been in 1619 and again in 1648 at the Peace of Westphalia.<sup>2</sup> There is a prophecy by Comenius that has inspired generations of dominated Czechs: "I, too, believe before God that when the storms of wrath have passed, to thee shall return the rule over thine own things, O Czech people!" Only now has Comenius's prophecy been fulfilled in the recent liberation of the Czech people from the suffocating domination of Soviet Communist imperialism since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Long may such freedom last.

We often think of Martin Luther lighting the torch of the Reformation, but the Czechs have the oldest Reformation tradition in mainland Europe. Long before Luther nailed his theses to the door of Wittenberg Church in 1517, the Czechs had established their own national Protestant church with their own vernacular Bible and hymn book. In 1406 or 1407 and perhaps as early as 1385, Czech students studying at Oxford brought back to Prague the writings of John Wyclif. The rector of Charles University in

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2. Europe's Thirty Years' War ended October 24, 1648, with the Peace of Westphalia, whose treaties were guaranteed by France and Sweden. The long war had left the German states destitute; mercenary troops from Bohemia, Denmark, France, Spain, Sweden, and the German states themselves had destroyed eighteen thousand villages, fifteen hundred towns, and two thousand castles.

Prague, Jan Hus (1372?–1415), a man of outstanding intellectual gifts and personal integrity, took up Wyclif's ideas. In particular, he took up the belief that, in true remembrance of the Last Supper, the Communion, or Eucharist, should be given in both kinds—bread and wine. The chalice became the symbol of the Hussite revolution, and Hussite supporters were often referred to as *Utraquists*, meaning “in both kinds.” Jan Hus was a great scholar and a gifted preacher. Between 1402 and 1403 the Bethlehem Chapel in the Old Town district of Prague was regularly packed, standing room only, with people eager to hear him expound on the Bible in their own Czech tongue.

In 1412, Antipope John XXIII declared war on Naples and, to raise money, instituted the practice of selling “indulgences”—official forgiveness by the Church for payment. Hus was outraged and was promptly excommunicated for his protest. Outlawed from Prague, Hus wandered about the countryside preaching and spreading Reformation ideas throughout the country. In 1415 the Council of Constance invited him to explain his views and promised him safe conduct. It was a trap: on false charges he was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. It was his birthday; he was just forty-three years old.

Jan Hus began, and Comenius continued, even in exile, the reformed group that came to be called the *Unitas Fratrum* (the Unity of Brethren), also now known as the Moravian Church, which still exists with a worldwide following. Its formation was formalized in 1457, and it is the oldest of all Protestant churches, with its own hymn book (1505) and Czech-language Bible.

It is in the light of this historical background that we can begin to understand the remarkable life of Comenius. He was born into a family of the Unity of Brethren on March 28, 1592, at a place called Uhersky Brod (Hungarian Ford) in Moravia. His father's family was Hungarian; the family name was originally Szeges, but his father took the name Komenský from the nearby village of Komna. During the year Comenius was born, fifteen thousand people in London died of plague in one of the infectious epidemics that all too frequently broke out all over Europe. By the time he was six years old, Comenius's family had also succumbed to plague, and he was left an orphan. From 1608 to 1611, Comenius studied at the Latin school maintained by the Brethren at Prerov. From there he went on to study at the University of Herborn in Nassau and then to Heidelberg, one

of the chief centers of Protestant learning. On graduation he became a priest of the Unity of Brethren and lived and taught at Fulnek on the border of Moravia and Silesia.

At this time Comenius was perhaps not particularly ambitious. In peacetime the rectorship at Fulnek might have been the summit of his career, and he could have lived out his life teaching, bringing up his family, and tending his bees. Those days at Fulnek were some of the happiest of his life, and there he might have grown to contented old age had not the Thirty Years' War intervened. Only a short time after his ordination, an insurrection flared up, and purely local issues were fanned into a flame that burned pitilessly through the mainland of Europe for a generation. The problem was that the Bohemian people—the nobility as well as the ordinary people—followed the teachings of Jan Hus. Emperor Rudolf II, busy with his alchemy and occult pursuits, had been persuaded by the Bohemian people to grant them an extraordinary and unique document called a "Letter of Majesty" (July 1609). This document guaranteed their religious freedom under Roman Catholic rule and compromised Rudolf II's sovereignty more severely than his religious scruples. Rudolf's immediate successor, Matthias (1612–1619), tolerated it, but his successor, the formidable Jesuit-educated Ferdinand II (1619–1637), had religious scruples aplenty. He refused to tolerate the obvious contradiction of the Bohemian people united in a Protestant state church while living under Catholic Hapsburg rule. The Bohemian people themselves were only too painfully aware of this contradiction and had sought a Protestant monarch as remedy. They had invited Frederick V, the elector of the Palatinate, and his consort Elizabeth, daughter of James I of England, to become their king and queen.

Naturally, Comenius was in Prague Cathedral on November 4, 1619 when Frederick V and his queen were crowned. Little would he have suspected that this would be the very last public event of the Czech church and state for three hundred years—until the first republic was proclaimed in 1918. To his young and fervent mind this, the last ceremonial act of the Bohemian Church, would have been confirmation that the Czech national and religious expectations were about to be fulfilled.

To the bewilderment of the Bohemian people, James I and the German Protestant allies did not come to their aid when the Hapsburg troops moved in. The Bohemian revolt was all the more dangerous to Hapsburg

interests because of the involvement of the nobility and prominent members of society. Ferdinand's victory at the Battle of the White Mountain on November 6, 1620 was decisive: the national church and state of Bohemia disappeared. However, the war continued throughout Europe until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. As the Czech lands entered that benighted period of subjection to the brutalities of Hapsburg imperial reaction and the Counter Reformation, Comenius, shattered by the end of all his hopes, became a fugitive and an exile. His home in Fulnek was burned and with it his library and his own work in progress. Together with forty other pastors of the Bohemian Brethren he went to live in hiding at Brandýs nad Orlicí—Brandeis on the Adler, or Eagle River—on the estate of Count Charles Zerotin.

It was the nadir of his life. He had lost everything, including his wife and children, who had died of plague. Yet out of his despair, Comenius wrote his finest and most forgiving work: *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*. The book is a kind of anti-utopia, which discloses the futility and vacuousness of a human society bent only on its own aggrandizement and self-gratification, and it satirizes the topsy-turvy world of the Thirty Years' War. Finally, the pilgrim finds solace in the acceptance of Christ and the paradise of the heart.

In 1628, an edict was passed that meant Count Zerotin could no longer protect Comenius and the other members of the Unity on his estates. Once more their lives were at risk. With several others Comenius set out over the Czech frontier to join a community of the Unity of Brethren at Leszno in Poland, and though he lived to be seventy-eight, he never again returned to his native land.

Leszno, in western Poland near the border with Silesia, had been home to the Unitas Fratrum since 1548, a community largely made up of Bohemian and Moravian émigrés. After 1628, when Ferdinand II had issued restrictions on persons (other than Jews) who would not conform to the Roman Catholic Church residing or owning land in Bohemia or Moravia, the town numbers were increased by the exiled members of the Unity who traveled with Bishop Erastus and Bishop Cyril. The town on Count Leszczyński's estate became a city in 1633. The school founded in 1555 had already been made a college in 1624.

The Unity brethren had taken with them from Moravia a printing press under the supervision of M. T. Krokosinsky, who had been in charge of

the Kralice Press in Králická, Moravia and in 1631 they published Comenius's *Open Gate of Languages* (*Janua linguarum reserata*). It is a sort of compendium of useful knowledge combined with a Latin grammar. It was published in London in 1632 and was translated into fifteen languages in Comenius's lifetime. Its sales were enormous, and it became, after the Bible, probably the best-known work at the time, bringing him considerable fame. Greatly encouraged, Comenius continued to work on his *Pansophiae Prodigium*, which was published in London in 1639 thanks to Comenius's loyal friend and correspondent in England, Samuel Hartlib (1595–1662).

In 1641, Comenius—by then a senior cleric of the *Unitas Fratrum* in Leszno—was invited to England to discuss the implementation of a state educational scheme. The invitation was apparently due to the efforts of Samuel Hartlib, a German-speaking Pole from Elbing in Polish Prussia who had settled in London in 1628, when he was about thirty years old, and who was in close touch with John Dury (1595–1680), an émigré Scottish intellectual interested in similar philanthropic and educational projects. Comenius and Hartlib had been correspondents since 1632, and in 1634 Hartlib had started fund-raising for the purpose of publishing Comenius's pansophic work in England.

Comenius was impressed by the learning and piety he found in England, but his visit to England was a failure through no fault of his own. There was no will to act on his reforms during the upheavals of the Civil War that broke out during his stay. After the outbreak of war, Comenius went to Sweden at the invitation of Lewis de Geer (1587–1652), a Dutchman who had settled in Sweden and who had amassed a vast fortune by supplying munitions to the Swedish army during the Thirty Years' War. Through his important business connections and influence in Sweden, he had been able to negotiate with the Swedish government for a post for Comenius. Comenius accepted a commission from Chancellor Oxenstiern to prepare the Latin schoolbooks for use in Swedish schools, but, finding the Swedish climate too harsh, Comenius went to live in Elbing in Prussia, where he spent the next six years.

It is tempting to think of Comenius as a kind of educational expert dashing around Europe like some modern-day management guru. No sooner had he agreed to serve the Swedish government than Comenius found himself having to turn down two further invitations—one from

Cardinal Richelieu to found an academy of science in France and one from John Winthrop of Massachusetts, who invited him to take up the presidency of Harvard, which had been founded six years earlier.<sup>3</sup>

In 1648, Bishop Justinus died, and members of the Unity elected Comenius their bishop. Outliving all his colleagues, he eventually became the last bishop of the Bohemian Brethren, who remained exiles since the Peace of Westphalia made no provision for their return. In 1650, Comenius went to live in Hungary at the invitation of Count George Rákóczy, prince of Transylvania and ruler of northern Hungary, including the towns of Tokay and Sárospatak. Comenius settled at Sárospatak, where he worked indefatigably, writing new books and attempting, against great opposition, to reorganize the school. He was received with open resentment and hostility by the local teachers and never succeeded in winning them over. His stay was not a success. Stay he did, however—for political reasons. He hoped to bring about the formation of a Protestant league that would drive the Austrians out of Bohemia so that the Brethren could return, and for this he depended on what influence the Rákóczy family could bring to bear. He did, in fact, persuade George Rákóczy II to negotiate an alliance with England and Sweden against Austria. Eventually, even Comenius's patience snapped: unable to stand the bickering and opposition he had met with in Hungary any longer, in 1654 he returned to Leszno in Poland.

Oliver Cromwell became famous throughout Europe as the great protector of Protestants, and Comenius hoped he would come to their aid. He was willing to help, but not at the price of putting armies into the field. Instead, Cromwell suggested that the Bohemian Brethren and the Vaudois (or Waldenses), who were being persecuted by the duke of Savoy, should band together and establish themselves in Ireland. Comenius refused, stubbornly persisting in the belief that the Brethren belonged in their own country and would eventually be allowed to return there.

Thus Comenius was in Leszno in 1655, when war broke out between Sweden and Poland; the victorious Swedes occupied the town in August of that year. The Brethren should have remained neutral in all this but in one

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3. One of the books bequeathed to Harvard College by John Harvard in 1638 was a copy of Comenius's *Janua Linguarum* which by 1650 had become a regular textbook in use by the college.



of his more serious errors of judgment, Comenius wrote a panegyric to Charles Gustavus, the conquering Swedish king. The peace was short-lived. The Polish army regained control and in reprisals against the Brethren pillaged and burned the town. For the second time, Comenius had to stand by helplessly as his library was burned. The Brethren blamed Comenius for what had happened because he had taken sides with the Swedes—thus provoking the hostility of the Poles, who had not previously been hostile to the Brethren. Comenius was sixty-five and homeless again. Lawrence de Geer, son of Lewis, came to his rescue and invited him to come and live in Amsterdam, where, after fourteen years of working and writing, he died (November 15, 1670) and was buried in the Walloon Reformed Church at Naarden.

*Comenius's Intellectual Background:  
Pansophy and Rosicrucianism*

In the figure of Comenius we see a powerful example of how the Rosicrucian enlightenment and its brotherhood of learning could be realized in action. Frances Yates finds it hard to relate Comenius to the representatives of Rosicrucian thought in Germany. She offers only that Comenius and Andreae had much in common. "Both were devout, reformed clerics; both were interested in new intellectual movements which they grafted on to their native piety, the German Lutheran tradition in the one case [Andreae] and the Hussite tradition [Comenius]. Both lived through the same terrible period, and had to work on as best they could through wars and persecutions."<sup>4</sup>

However, I think there is substantial evidence of Comenius's involvement in hermetic, Renaissance, and Rosicrucian thought, and in presenting this case I shall discuss:

1. Comenius's own education in Herborn and Heidelberg, where he was introduced to the Renaissance tradition of hermetic and pansophic ideas dating from the sixteenth century. He encountered

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4. Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 156.

Johann Heinrich Alsted and Johann Valentin Andreae who became major influences on his pansophic works.

2. Comenius's discussion of alchemy and Rosicrucianism in his best-known work, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*.

3. The transmission and increasingly practical conception of utopian ideals manifested by Andreae and others, leading to

4. Comenius's attempts to create a college that would embody the ideals of the brotherhood of Christian Rosenkreutz, ultimately realized in the foundation of the Royal Society, which strayed away from the metaphysical framework Comenius had envisaged.

We may sum up his major interests as pansophy, Rosicrucianism, utopian ideals, and a worldwide Christian society of learning.

What is pansophy and where does it come from? According to Yates, the term *pansophy* was first used by Francesco Patrizzi (1529–1597), a mathematician whom the bishop of Cyprus brought to the Venetian court as a specimen of outstanding brilliance. Patrizzi wrote about history, rhetoric, war, and geometry, but his chief work is the huge multivolume *Nova de universis philosophia*, published in 1591. This work is divided into four parts: *panaugia* (all splendor, the physical and metaphysical properties of light), *panarchia* (a series of all principles), *panpsychia* (a theory of all-soul), and *pancosmia* (a theory of all cosmos). The work expounded a micro- and macrocosmic philosophy, exploring the inner world of the human being and the outer world of nature.<sup>5</sup> Bartholomäus Scleus, a mystic who lived at the end of the sixteenth century in Poland, also used the term *pansophy* in a text written in about 1596. He opposed orthodox theology with his own "Mystica Theologia Universalis und Pansophia," which he equated with a kind of celestial magic.<sup>6</sup> A more important and direct influence on Comenius's development is Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638), his tutor and friend at Herborn from 1611 until 1613. At this time Alsted, a brilliant and prolific polymath, was also planning an encyclopedia of all human knowledge, which was finally published in seven volumes in 1630.

5. Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964, pp. 110–126.

6. Hans Schick, *Die geheime Geschichte der Rosenkreuzer*. Schwarzenburg, 1980, pp. xx–xxi, xxvii.

His *Encyclopaedia Omnium Scientiarum* is often acknowledged as one of the best of the many produced in the seventeenth century. In Alsted's hands, *pansophy*, or "all knowledge," was to become an educational tool for human reform. He and later his pupil Comenius were fired with a mission to find a kind of universal antidote to ignorance, misunderstandings, hallucinations, and errors.

The seventeenth century was a great age for encyclopedias. Because knowledge was expanding very fast, there was a great desire to classify everything that was known and write it all down. In his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and in *The New Atlantis* (published posthumously in 1627), Francis Bacon had envisioned groups of scientists compiling encyclopedias of the various branches of human knowledge. In proposing a new rationale, a new *Organon*, of scientific inquiry, Bacon was also proposing a reformation of natural philosophy, insisting on the patient gleaning of facts and direct firsthand observation.

Comenius was influenced by Bacon but even more directly by Alsted, his teacher at Herborn. Through Alsted, he also learned of the medieval philosopher and mystic Ramon Lull of Majorca (1232–1316). Alsted edited several works by Lull, including the *Clavis Artis Lullianae* (1609). Alsted saw this "Lullian Art" as a pansophic key, which informs all his subsequent works on physics, metaphysics, and cosmic harmony published at Herborn between 1610 and 1616. It is obvious that Alsted's mind was aglow with Lullian and pansophic ideas while Comenius was his student, and it is also noteworthy that his encyclopedic opus coincides with the publication of Andreae's Rosicrucian texts. For Comenius the attraction of Lull's work lay in a form of nature mysticism, in which all created things speak of the God who is love. The two aspects of Lull's spiritual vision are the love of God expressed in and through nature and the love of God in Christ.

From Bacon and Alsted, Comenius caught the mood of the time, the encyclopedic desire to know everything that can be known as truthfully and fully as possible. Comenius also acknowledged Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654), the presumed author of the Rosicrucian pamphlets, as his intellectual and spiritual mentor and named him as one of those who inspired him toward the reform of education. Even more important is the congruence of their ideas relating to a plan for world improvement on Christian-pansophic lines, and clearly Comenius is

indebted for his pansophic reformist ideas to the less well known writings of Andreae. Five years after the publication of Andreae's *Peregrini in Patria errores* (1618), Comenius followed its presentation closely in his own *Labyrinth of the World*, and we know that in 1659, Comenius asked a friend to help him replace lost books by Andreae, identifying these as the source of his pansophic lines of thought.<sup>7</sup>

Pansophy is related to the Platonic ideal of truth in forms, but Comenius takes this further than Greek notions of nature. In his Christian metaphysics, the ground of all being is the unity of God. Pansophy was Comenius's theology; like Lull, he found it impossible to separate knowledge of things from God's revelation. Because God wishes us to know him, everything that lives speaks of the divine. Therefore, true education must be inextricably linked to moral and spiritual development. Comenius wanted the developed personality to understand itself and all living things and thereby to come to a knowledge and love of God. The "book of nature" reflected the "book of God." Through learning about nature, in which God had implanted divine seals and correspondences, students would be brought to understand the divine nature of God. This was a widely held view of the time: Jakob Böhme describes how his spirit "recognized God in grass and plants," and Sir Thomas Browne called Nature "The other Bible."<sup>8</sup>

Comenius's pansophic works are directly related to his educational theory and practice. He recognized the three aspects of human life, material, rational and spiritual, and felt that all education was partial that failed to take account of all three aspects. Comenius's confidence in his approach lay in his confidence in the organization of the universe itself. Neo-Platonic concepts of parallels between human beings and nature were behind all his educative thinking.

In this respect, Comenius's thinking was very different from Sir Francis Bacon's, with whom he has often been compared. Bacon sought the development and cultivation of the scientific mind, while Comenius's goal was more evolutionary: the perfectibility of humankind, both individually and

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7. Hans Schick, *op. cit.*, pp. 150, 152.

8. Jakob Böhme (1575-1624), the "shoemaker of Görlitz," the German mystic whose writings have had a strong influence on alchemy; Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), English physician and author of mystical works.

socially. Everyone should be prepared for the last days and educated to be fit for the kingdom of God. The advancement of learning in Bacon's sense was only a step on the way—partial knowledge of the kind Comenius considered inferior. It was inadequate to develop the mind and will, insufficient to build human relationships and, above all, too partial to build human relationships to the universe and its Creator.

Rosicrucianism provides the second major strand of Comenius's thought. The young Comenius was familiar with the Rosicrucian manifestos, written in the first decade of the seventeenth century, in their early pre-publication phase. His references to them in the *Labyrinth of the World* date his encounter with them to 1612—two years in advance of their first publication. In the *Labyrinth*, the Pilgrim, an autobiographical persona, studies alchemy (chapter 12) and “beholds the Rosicrucians” (chapter 13). He describes the Rosicrucian manifestos and ensuing publications as wrapped boxes with inscriptions such as *Portæ Sapientiae*, *Fortalitium Scientiæ*, *Bonum Macro-micro-cosmicon*, *Harmonia utriusque Cosmi*, *Christiano-Cabalisticum*, and so forth. These may be recognized as real Rosicrucian titles or close parodies of them.<sup>9</sup> This suggests a close familiarity with the esoteric and hermetic literature of the early seventeenth century and possibly, since Comenius had read the manifestos in manuscript, an intimate friendship with their author(s), whom he may well have met in Heidelberg.

Comenius would thus have considered himself a part of that intellectual and pious elite to whom the manifestos are addressed. He would have embraced the notion that “alterations” were at hand, that the Eagles' feathers—symbol of the Hapsburg tyranny—would be removed, and that the time was coming “when the world would awake out of her heavy and drowsy sleep.”<sup>10</sup> Comenius would have seen in the prophecies of the *Confessio* an immediate relevance to his own native Bohemia and her struggles for national and religious liberation.<sup>11</sup> The cynical and bitter tone with

9. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

10. From the *Confessio*. Quoted in Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

11. The second Rosicrucian manifesto, the *Confessio fraternitatis*, was first published in 1615 in Latin (together with the *Consideratio brevis*) and later that same year in German. Although some manuscripts exist of English translations dating from the 1620s, an English version was not published till 1652. This was issued under the name of the alchemical writer Thomas Vaughan.

which Comenius refers to the Rosicrucian literature as prettily wrapped but empty boxes indicates his disappointment and disillusion once political reaction and religious wars had swept his hopes away.

The third intellectual debt of Comenius to the hermetic and humanistic currents of the Renaissance was the utopia, or ideal state, stemming from Plato through Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Tommaso Campanella's *La Città del Sole* (*City of the Sun*, written in 1602 and published in 1623). Three years after the publication of the *Chemical Wedding*, Andreae published his *Christianopolis* (1619), in which he outlined a blueprint for an ideal Christian society in a city governed by officials with angelic names and based on a symbolic plan expressing the cabalistic and hermetic harmony of microcosm and macrocosm. This work articulates the dream of a new age of the holy spirit, combining Andreae's youthful memory of Calvinist Geneva, Protestant Christianity, and Renaissance hermetic ideals.

The utopia was not a genre Comenius attempted. *The Labyrinth of the World* describes an anti-utopia. But the ideal of the members of a society working in harmony one with another for the benefit of the whole community is a motive force behind all his work. The global society he envisaged is in some respects an extension of his own experience of the close-knit Unity of Brethren communities with which he worked. From a "little unity" he came to dream of a "great unity," which, from his chiliastic position, was an essential preliminary for the coming of Christ's Kingdom on Earth.<sup>12</sup>

However, the disillusionment resulting from the outbreak of war and religious strife led to a less occult formulation of the utopian ideals in the Rosicrucian manifestos and united both Andreae and Comenius in a more practical program of reform. Andreae's preface to *Christianopolis* dismissed the Rosicrucian Brotherhood as a "jest," and he simultaneously gave a more explicit statement of his reforming ideals in his plans for a "Societas Christiana," set forth in 1619 and 1620. This group existed briefly under the leadership of a German prince before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, and in about 1628, Andreae tried to relaunch it at Nuremberg.<sup>13</sup> Andreae's new reforming ideas had a considerable influence on both

12. *Chiliastic* refers to the Christian belief that Jesus will reign on Earth for a thousand years of peace before the Day of Judgment.

13. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-152.

Comenius and Hartlib. The Societas Christiana was also responsible for stimulating a related society in the Baltic states named Antilia, with which Hartlib was associated prior to his departure for England in 1628. It was led by Andreae's friend Heinrich Heim of Dorpat (Tartu). In the years before and during the English Civil War, Hartlib became a central figure among a group of scholars concerned with the reform of the English state and church.<sup>14</sup>

Further evidence of Andreae's utopian influence may be found in Comenius's later reforming ideals. Correspondence between Andreae and Comenius in 1628–1629 shows that Andreae recognized Comenius as his intellectual heir and placed on his shoulders the mantle of the Rosicrucian legacy. During the summer of 1628, Comenius wrote to Andreae, then pastor of Calw in Württemberg, asking what holy ambition lay behind his writings. On September 16, 1629, Andreae wrote to Comenius in detail about "Societas Christiana" whose manifestos *Imago* and *Leges* he had already sent him. Andreae reviewed his abortive plans for a Rosicrucian brotherhood based on the Rosicrucian manifestos and his second attempt to reconcile pansophy and Christianity in a brotherhood of Christ in 1619. Personal misfortunes and the Thirty Years' War had foiled all these efforts. But now that Comenius had turned to him full of enthusiasm and reforming zeal, perhaps he could encourage him to carry on his ideas and realize his plans. With these words, Andreae enjoins Comenius to become his heir and the executor of his reforming Rosicrucian ideas.<sup>15</sup> In this late exchange between the two men there is a potent demonstration of Comenius's harvest of his earlier indebtedness to Andreae for ideas bearing on pansophy and educational reform. It is an eloquent tribute to Comenius that Andreae turned to him to fulfil the Rosicrucian legacy.

The fourth and final instance of Comenius's Rosicrucian legacy concerns the attempts to found an "invisible college" of Christian and scientific learning and its eventual, if partial, realization, in the Royal Society. The synthesis

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14. Charles Webster "Macaria: Samuel Hartlib and the Great Reformation," *Acta Comeniana* 2 (XXVI) (Prague, 1970), pp. 149–151. The complicated question of the precise influence of Comenius and Hartlib in the intellectual life of revolutionary England is fully discussed in G. H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius* (London, 1947) and H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Three Foreigners: the Philosophers of the Puritan Revolution" in *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1967), pp. 237–293.

15. Hans Schick, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–152.

he sought between the natural world and the human world has inspired the principles relating to the international organization of education that have made Comenius a kind of frontier guide for many modern institutions. Two in particular stand out as direct legacies of Comenius's pansophic thinking: the Royal Society and UNESCO.

Comenius came to the land of Wyclif in September, 1641, and it was while he was in England that he wrote *Way of Light*, outlining a college that would guide and educate society toward universal salvation. He had in mind a Christian academy for pansophy, the purpose of which was to research science, to elaborate a universal language, and thus to bring about a holy unity of all nations. In *Way of Light*, in which he did not trouble to disguise his millenarian views, Comenius shows that the college or society he envisioned was to be a network and intellectual meeting ground for people of science and learning all over the world. It is not surprising that Comenius, the unhappy exile, should dream of a new community of letters transcending national boundaries. Presumably, he needed little persuasion to sign a covenant with Hartlib and John Dury regarding the aims and objectives of their concerted labors. It was probably the extreme chiliasm of their views that led to the thoroughly overambitious program—the education of the younger generation within a framework of the complete overhaul of education together with the reconciliation of the churches—but it caught on with the reforming party champing at the bit before the outbreak of the English Civil War.

Hartlib's enthusiasm for a pansophic educational reform of society stemmed from his earlier membership in the Antilia society in Prussia, which itself derived from Andreae's ideas. One of the documents relating to this society describes a college of Christian specialists in science and technology whose role was to accumulate a comprehensive system of experimental knowledge and scientific pansophy for the material good of society. Hartlib began to see scientific and technical solutions to many social problems, ranging from public health to decimal coinage, and his approach to pansophy became more economic and utilitarian. It was natural that he should see in Comenius's work a close correspondence with the aims of the Antilia society and he, like Andreae, thought Comenius would be an obvious choice for the leadership of such a "college of light" in England.<sup>16</sup> The idea

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16. Charles Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 152.



of a college must have been irresistible to Comenius, and, while in England, he investigated the Savoy and Chelsea in London and the city of Winchester as possible locations.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, the millenarian hopes of Comenius, Hartlib, and Dury were dashed, and Comenius left England in June 1642. However, it is possible to trace the influence of their pansophy and reforming sodalities in the Royal Society during its formative years. For instance, letters of Robert Boyle to Samuel Hartlib and others from 1646 to 1647 refer to an "Invisible College" that was already meeting regularly to discuss reform of scientific education.<sup>17</sup> This was the precursor of the Royal Society itself. Weekly meetings of "divers worthy persons, inquisitive into natural philosophy and other parts of human learning, and particularly of what hath been called the New Philosophy" had been taking place since 1645.<sup>18</sup> Since many of these persons were resident in Oxford, an association began there under the title of the Philosophical Society of Oxford. Usually they met in the rooms of Dr. Wilkins, Warden of Wadham College. The Oxford group continued to meet from 1648 to 1659.

Why were there so many new societies, and what was their relationship to university scholarship? The late sixteenth century had seen a sudden mushrooming of universities—Herborn (1584), Graz (1586), Leiden (1575), Groningen (1614), Utrecht (1636), Trinity College, Dublin (1591), Edinburgh (1583), and Aberdeen (1593). Many of the new universities were founded to serve religious or political purposes—some at least were founded simply because Protestants refused to attend Catholic universities, and vice versa.<sup>19</sup>

Religion apart, the education offered by many of these new places of learning was pretty much what had been offered in previous decades. Changes in both the range of subjects and methods of teaching were

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17. Robert Boyle (1627–1691), British physicist and chemist; developed a compressed-air pump and experimented in pneumatics, specific gravities, refraction, crystals; electricity, etc.; his *Defence Against Linus* enunciated Boyle's law that the volume of a gas varies inversely to pressure; a strong defender of Christianity.

18. Quoted from the Charter of the Royal Society. For more information on the emergence of the Royal Society see Joan Simon, "The Comenian Educational Reformers 1640–1660 and the Royal Society of London," *Acta Comeniana* 2 (XXVI) (Prague, 1970), pp. 165–178.

19. Of 22 new German universities that came into existence between 1540 and 1700, only seven survived into the nineteenth century.

overdue. Hence the frustration of Comenius and Hartlib, who were still trying to bring this about in the middle of the seventeenth century. Because the universities were incapable of adapting themselves to the new knowledge, there was a need for societies that could concentrate the efforts of scientists, provide facilities for experiments, and publish the results, such as the *Societas secretorum naturae* at Naples (founded in 1560), the *Accademia de' Lincei* in Rome (1603–1651), of which Galileo was a member, and the *Accademia del Cimento* at Florence (1657–1667).

The Invisible College mentioned by Boyle and its successor group in Oxford were fulfilling just such a role of fostering extramural research in natural philosophy. It is evident, however, that the earlier pansophic impulse provided by Comenius, Dury, and Hartlib stressed the unity of knowledge and a close relationship between the principles of religion and science. By the time of the Restoration, the excitement and reforming zeal of the Civil War and interregnum were obsolete. At a time of political reaction, the English intellectual elite preferred to concentrate on scientific progress without the complications of pansophy and social and religious reform. This was the prevailing mood when the Oxford group transferred its meetings to London in about 1659. The Royal Society was formally established in 1660, and by 1670 its membership had doubled.<sup>20</sup>

Explicitly excluded from the Society's interests were university disciplines of metaphysics, divinity, morals, grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Instead, energies were directed toward improving useful arts, manufacture, machines, and inventions and also in recovery of ancient skills and secrets that were lost. Furthermore, in keeping with its aims, the membership was to include merchants, navigators, and specialists in mechanical arts as well as chemists, physicians, mathematicians, and astronomers. The importance of the participation of technicians was never underestimated. From the beginning experiments were undertaken; in fact, the royal warrant of 1663 specifically mentions "The Royal Society for the improving of Natural Knowledge by experiments."

When *Way of Light* was finally published in Amsterdam in the spring of 1668, long after it was written, the Royal Society was clearly drawing away from Comenius's ideals. In a long dedication, Comenius addressed

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20. The date of its foundation is sometimes given as 1662 because it was in July of that year that it received the charter of incorporation.

the fellows of the Society as "illuminati," thus identifying them as inheritors of his earlier search with Hartlib, Dury, and others for Light and Truth. Here Comenius is clearly designating the Royal Society as the realization of the pansophic college in *Way of Light*. But following his expression of joy at this enterprise, Comenius sounds a note of spiritual warning. He asks what can be built on these foundations and adds that if science is regarded as an end in itself the work might turn out to be a "Babylon turned upside down, building not towards heaven, but towards earth."<sup>21</sup>

Comenius's concern was perhaps prophetic. In July, 1642, Comenius met René Descartes in Endegeest Castle near Leiden. Their meeting was cordial but the scientific approach and understanding of each were radically opposed. On the one hand, Descartes advocated rationalism and the mathematization of all empirical data in a causal-mechanistic model of reality. By contrast, Comenius was convinced that human knowledge obtained solely through the senses and rational thought was imperfect and incomplete. Descartes separated the human being and consciousness from the world of nature as an observer or manipulator, whereas Comenius always viewed humankind as part of nature with a definite responsibility for the perfection of self and of nature. It is poignant to reflect that the alienating and divisive Cartesian separation of reason and nature has led to technological tyranny and the exploitation of the world. It is interesting to speculate about what kind of science, technology, and economics might obtain today had Comenius's pansophic worldview prevailed in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century.

Any introduction to Comenius and his work would be incomplete without some discussion of his extraordinary work, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, written in 1623 while he was in hiding at Brandeis soon after the Battle of the White Mountain. This book, acknowledged as one of the great works of world literature, marks the nadir of his life. Comenius's first wife, Magdalena, and his two children had died of plague. In a few short months he had lost everything he had; his country was occupied by an oppressive regime, and the whole of Europe was at war. In a mood of extreme desolation, he wrote about this Kafkaesque, topsy-turvy, back-to-front world under the rule of Ferdinand II, in which there

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21. Frances Yates, *op. cit.* pp. 190–191.

was no justice, no fairness, no humanity. What sort of men did Ferdinand II employ to keep justice? Comenius names them: Judge Nogood, Judge Takegift; Judge Knowliddle; Judge Hearsay. Ferdinand's seizure of property is interpreted by Comenius as rapacious lords oppressing the poor, while they themselves are rich, swollen, and bloated. Things are no longer called by their right names. Greed goes by the name of economy, cruelty by the name severity. The moral order is overthrown, and in its place is a graphic picture of the Brethren, beaten and tortured, and of the cruelty and horror of the war that was to last an entire generation.

*The Labyrinth of the World* represents Comenius's own dark night of the soul, in which he was brought to the depths of utter despair. In this state of desolation, in the pathetic abyss of heart and mind, feeling that all doors were closed to him—home and family, his church and nationhood—he found a Gnostic window into the Paradise of the Heart. Here he finds Christ and the transfiguring power of the light and love of God. The Paradise of the Heart is the mystical, transfiguring vision from which, cleansed and renewed, Comenius emerged to resume his pastoral role and his work of pansophy, of reformed education, which was to make him famous throughout Europe. This is the esoteric side of his Christianity, which gave him the strength and courage to renew his life in the service of others.

Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) had made the same discovery and wrote:

To apprehend God we must pass from intelligence through faith to vision under the power of love. Knowledge and love move hand in hand and are united only in the experience of ultimate union. That experience is one of indescribable delight. But it can be translated into the work of the world; for in Christ the Mediator between God and man, contemplation becomes action.<sup>22</sup>

*The Labyrinth of the World* is an allegory in which all branches of knowledge and all sorts and conditions of people are represented. Like Bunyan's famous *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*, it is a delineation of an individual's interior journey and a timeless spiritual allegory. It is not a utopia but a personal response to the horrors of the Thirty

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22. Quoted in *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Mysticism and the Mystery Religions*, John Ferguson, ed., London, 1976, pp. 132–133.

Years' War, involving separation from a community, loss of loved ones, and cruelty and division on every side.

At a time of rapid social change, war, and struggles over belief, one aspiration emerged over all—the desire for a better world in which justice reigns. Such yearnings had their roots in the late medieval millenarian ideas of Joachim of Fiore, in the nostalgic rediscovery of the classical myths of the golden age in the early Renaissance period, and in the simplicity of the early Christians, which all Protestant reformers aspired to recover. Such an aspiration was, of course, the wellspring of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. In his works Comenius abundantly illustrates the spiritual scope of the Rosicrucian endeavor. From the contemplative mysticism of *The Labyrinth of the World* to the reforming practice of his pansophic and educational works, and his contribution to the origins of the Royal Society, Comenius combined the Christian ideals of the Unity of Brethren with Andreae's hermetic-Rosicrucian call for a "universal and general reformation of the whole wide world."<sup>23</sup>

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*I would like to say thank you to Ralph White for his inspiration in organizing this conference and including Comenius, thus helping to bring this now somewhat forgotten and shadowy figure back to the memory of the modern world.*

*We are extremely fortunate in having in Oxford the Comenius Library which was brought to the University by Zbynek Zeman, professor of both the University of Oxford and the Charles University in Prague. I believe this library is the largest collection of works by and about Comenius outside the Czech lands. In particular, I would like to put on record my appreciation of the scholars who have contributed so much to that literature: Professors Robert Evans and J. V. Polisensky, Dr. Charles Webster, Dr. Dagmar Capkova, and of course, Dame Frances Yates herself without whose stimulating book on the Rosicrucian Enlightenment we might not all be gathered here.*

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23. Full title of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the first Rosicrucian manifesto.

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*The Rosicrucian  
Resurgence at the  
Court of Cromwell*

PAUL BEMBRIDGE

## *On a Drop of Dew*

See how the Orient Dew,  
Shed from the Bosom of the Morn  
Into the blowing Roses,  
Yet careless of its Mansion new;  
For the clear Region where 'twas born  
Round in its self incloses:  
And in its little Globes Extent,  
Frames as it can its native Element.  
How it the purple flow'r does slight,  
Scarce touching where it lyes,  
But gazing back upon the Skies,  
Shines with a mournful Light;  
Like its own Tear,  
Because so long divided from the Sphear.  
Restless it roules and unsecure,  
Trembling lest it grow impure:  
Till the warm Sun pittie it's Pain,  
And to the Skies exhale it back again.  
So the Soul, that Drop, that Ray  
Of the clear Fountain of Eternal Day,  
Could it within the humane flow'r be seen,  
Remembring still its former height,  
Shuns the sweet leaves and blossoms green;  
And, recollecting its own Light,  
Does, in its pure and circling thoughts, express  
The greater Heaven in an Heaven less.  
In how coy a Figure wound,  
Every way it turns away:  
So the World excluding round,  
Yet receiving in the Day.  
Dark beneath, but bright above:  
Here disdaining, there in Love.  
How loose and easie hence to go:  
How girt and ready to ascend.  
Moving but on a point below,  
It all about does upwards bend.  
Such did the Manna's sacred Dew destil;  
White, and intire, though congeal'd and chill.  
Congeal'd on Earth: but does, dissolving, run  
Into the Glories of th' Almighty Sun.

— *Andrew Marvell*



N SUGGESTING that we regard the Cromwellian era in English history as a Rosicrucian episode, I do not intend to conjure up visions of hooded figures seizing the ship of state like occult pirates and using it for their own cloudy, ritualistic ends. Rather, we should remove the Gothic filters that have marginalized this word over the centuries and see seventeenth-century Rosicrucianism for what it perhaps more nearly was—something far more sensational, a bursting forth of the age-old esoteric tradition into political and cultural expression, a foamy glimpse of the great white whale that many a Captain Ahab has hunted through many a surging sea with far less chance of spearing than here.

Frances Yates, more than anyone, has taught us to see the main ideological battle lines of early modern European culture, between about 1560 and 1660, as being those drawn up between orthodox (usually Catholic) Christianity on the one hand and hermeticism on the other. One thinks of the hermetic philosophers she has written about: Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa demonized in an attack emanating from French Catholic courtly circles; Giordano Bruno burnt at the Catholic stake in 1600; Tommaso Campanella shut up in a Catholic prison for more than twenty-seven years; John Dee defending himself against the cry of “conjurer” in a printed letter to the archbishop of Canterbury; Robert Fludd publishing angry replies to the public attack of Mersenne (a devout French Catholic) upon him and upon the Rosicrucians he represented. And given the predominantly Protestant matrix of these hermeticists—Agrippa in Germany, Dee and Fludd in England, Bruno and Campanella befriended in Protestant hermetic circles—one comes away from Yates’s works with the striking impression that perhaps the real agenda of the Reformation was not so much to encourage Bible-reading pietism, as we have been led to believe, but to overthrow papal authority in favor of Protestant hermetic authority.



This view of the Reformation finds support in a recently published book by Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon*, which suggests that a major ideological aim of Reformation leaders was to propose a form of natural philosophy, blending ancient classical and Christian thought, that would demonstrate God's design in the physical world through astrological reasoning.<sup>1</sup> This is an ideological position, one might add, that also constitutes the central core of hermetic and Rosicrucian thinking:

Yet to whom it is permitted that he may see, and for his instruction use, those great letters and characters which the Lord God hath written and imprinted in heaven and earth's edifice . . . the same is already (although as yet unknown to himself) ours. (*Confessio*)

According to the *Confessio*, then, which is one of the two principal Rosicrucian manifestos, anyone (like Melanchthon, perhaps) who could read the astrological script of the Book of Nature—"those great letters and characters"—was in reality a Rosicrucian. Viewed in this light, the Rosicrucian manifestos of 1614, 1615, and 1616 (which, in any case, are known to have come from a strongly Lutheran milieu) may be regarded not so much as the "joking" product of an esoteric fringe as the serious vehicles of mainstream Protestant hermetic ideology in the tradition of Paracelsus (ca. 1493–1541), Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), and a host of other German thinkers, such as Oswald Croll (ca. 1580–1609) and Heinrich Khunrath (1560–1605)—all of whom (the Rosicrucian manifestos included) proclaim a belief in the language of nature, divinely written. But if a principal aim of the Reformation was to outclass the Catholic worldview (by replacing its personalized devotions with an astrological doctrine of signatures), the converse was also true: a principal aim of the Counter Reformation was to subdue the Protestant hermetic ideology.

Such, then, is the broad ideological battleground against which Yates, in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, presents the events of the English civil war and interregnum (1642–1660).<sup>2</sup> Shamed by the failure of the orthodox Stuart monarchs to support the Protestant Rosicrucian cause in Bohemia

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1. Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon* (Ideas in Context, No. 34). Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

(from where Elizabeth, the daughter of James I, and her husband, King Frederick V of Bohemia, were driven by Catholic Hapsburg forces into exile to the Hague) the English parliament separated from the English court, opening up a rift that led to the civil war in the 1640s that would reverse the Bohemian result and initiate a new (Cromwellian) era of Rosicrucian ascendancy.

In presenting this reading of the English civil war, Yates builds upon the work of the distinguished historian Hugh Trevor-Roper. In an article called "Three Foreigners and the Philosophy of the English Revolution" he showed that throughout the period of civil war and Cromwell's government, through twenty years of what Cromwell called "blood and confusion," the leaders of the revolution "were led on by a vision of society which they hoped somehow, at the end of it, to attain: a vision, moreover, made vivid to them by three philosophers, none of whom was English but who together may perhaps be called, both in their limited, practical aims and their wild, bloodshot mysticism, the real philosophers, and the only philosophers, of the English Revolution": Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, and Comenius.<sup>3</sup> These men were all patronized by Elizabeth, the Bohemian queen in exile in the Hague, the royal patron of the English opposition party.

It was the personal achievement of Frances Yates, however, rather than Trevor-Roper, to identify that vision as "Rosicrucian" by connecting these philosophers to the hermetic culture of Bohemia, and by showing that this culture was in turn linked to the hermetic culture of England—not least by the Dee-led missions to Rudolfine Prague of the late sixteenth century, which formed a prelude to the Rosicrucian furor of the early seventeenth century, to which the marriage of Princess Elizabeth with the elector palatine (1613), Frederick, was strongly related. It was Yates, too, again building on the work of Trevor-Roper, who showed that the 1640s and 1650s antecedent groups of the Royal Society were led by men who had strong connections with the Rosicrucian court at the Hague: John Wilkins and Theodore Haak, the former of whom was certainly aware of

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2. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972. The appendix prints the two principal Rosicrucian manifestos (the *Fama* and the *Confessio*) in English translation.

3. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Three Foreigners and the Philosophy of the English Revolution," *Encounter*, 1960, vol. 14, pp. 3–20.

the Rosicrucian manifestos, as Yates demonstrates.<sup>4</sup> Wilkins cites them in his *Mathematicall Magick* (1648), where he discusses a certain underground lamp like that “to be seen in the sepulchre of Francis Rosicrosse, as is more largely expressed in the Confession of that Fraternity.”<sup>5</sup> As a careful historian, Yates was obliged to draw the line where John Wilkins did not, in concluding that “as far as my own researches have gone, I have found no evidence of a real secret society calling itself ‘Rosicrucian,’” offering it as “a popular misunderstanding to have assumed that there was a real secret society behind these documents” (the three Rosicrucian manifestos) and concluding, rather, that “The R.C. Brothers were a fiction” suggesting a broader, cultural reality.<sup>6</sup>

It would seem that without further evidence, the most we might argue in support of the suggestion of a Rosicrucian resurgence at the “court” of Cromwell is that the Cromwellians were largely sympathetic to the Utopian hermetic worldview to which its three principal philosophers (Hartlib, Dury, and Comenius) were sympathetic. But to claim that the Cromwellians were principally driven by a specifically Rosicrucian vision of a Catholic-free and soon-to-be transformed culture, in line with the Rosicrucian manifestos, or, worse, to claim that the leading architects of the Cromwellian revolution constructed themselves as a covert Rosicrucian brotherhood seem, in the Yatesian view, to go beyond the available evidence. There is perhaps too little in the life and works of Hartlib and Cromwell to suggest a full-blooded commitment to hermetic principles transferable to political situations, which might help us to see them as Rosicrucians. Utopian they certainly were—but hermeticists, Rosicrucians?

However, there is further evidence (which Yates simply did not come across) to show that not only was the Cromwellian government and circle regarded by others, from without, as a specifically Rosicrucian milieu but also that, from within, leading members of that government and circle quite consciously constituted themselves as a Rosicrucian fraternity in name and purpose and sought to guide the polity accordingly. Let us look first at the evidence of those who observed from without.

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4. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, chapter 13.

5. John Wilkins, *Mathematicall Magick, or, The Wonders that may be Performed by Mechanicall Geometry* (London, 1648), quoted in Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

6. Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, pp. 250–251.

That the outgoing Cromwellian government had been a failed Rosicrucian adventure was a constant theme of the writings of Samuel Butler (1612–1680), the most popular satirist of the early Restoration. In his Restoration *Characters*, a gallery of contemporary portraits and types, Butler tells us that “the *Brethren of the Rosy-Cross*,” having recently attempted a misguided reformation of “their government” here below,

are now carrying on a thorough Reformation in the celestial World— They have repaired the old Spheres, that were worn as thin as Cob-web, and fastened the Stars in them with a Screw, by which means they may be taken off, and put on again at Pleasure.... But their Intelligence in the upper World is nothing to what they have in the infernal; for they hold exact Correspondence with the Devils.... By their Advice the Fiends lately attempted a *Reformation* of their government, that is, to bring all Things into Confusion, which among them is the greatest Order.<sup>7</sup>

That Butler is here identifying the Cromwell government as the government of “the Brethren of the Rosy-Cross” is plain enough; it is this same identification that forms the chief satiric strategy of his major poem, *Hudibras*, in which Cromwellians are mocked as bizarre Rosicrucian knights-errant, tilting at invisibles in the maddest traditions of Don Quixote. Published in parts from December 1662 onward, *Hudibras* rapidly became the most popular poem in London of the early 1660s (nine editions were published within a year of its first appearance), its chief success being amongst the victorious Royalist camp. As one contemporary tells us, it was “not only taken into his majesty’s hands, and read by him with great delight, but also by all courtiers, loyal scholars and gentlemen, to the great profit of the author and bookseller.”<sup>8</sup>

Set in the civil war, “When civil Fury first grew high,/ And men fell out they knew not why,” the poem tells how the knight Hudibras (a Presbyterian) sets out with his squire, Ralpho (an Independent), to right wrongs and reform society, largely through suppressing anything pleasurable, in the

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7. Samuel Butler, *Characters*, edited by Charles W. Davies. Cleveland and London: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970, pp. 148–149.

8. Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, edited by J. Wilders. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, p. xix.

supposed Puritan manner. However, the two fall to squabbling en route—and here the intention is to lampoon the Presbyterian/Independent divide in the Parliamentary party—with the result that the quest for reform is sidelined in favor of the quest for a widow, with whom the knight falls ridiculously in love, going to absurd lengths to win her, including a lengthy consultation with an astrologer called “Sidrophel the Rosy-crucian” (II, iii, Argument). Sidrophel is a chief target of the poem usually taken to refer to the prominent Parliamentary astrologer William Lilly, whose patron and lifelong friend was Bulstrode Whitelocke, the keeper of the great seal in Cromwell’s government. During the course of the satire on Sidrophel, all the old Rosicrucian targets are hit—Agrippa, Hermes Trismegistus, John Dee, and others.

Principally through the figure of Ralpho, Butler tags the Cromwell government as Rosicrucian, for Ralpho is an Independent, the party that drove out the Presbyterians in the events of 1647–1648 known as “Pride’s Purge,” leaving the Independents to go on and form the interregnum government under Cromwell. And Independent Ralpho is a Rosicrucian:

Deep-sighted in Intelligences,  
 Idea’s, Atomes, Influences,  
 And much of *Terra Incognita*,  
 Th’Intelligible world could say:  
 A deep occult Philosopher,  
 As learned as the *Wild Irish* are,  
 Or Sir *Agrippa*, for profound  
 And solid Lying much renown’d:  
 He *Anthroposophus*, and *Floud*,  
 And *Jacob Behmen* understood;  
 Knew many an Amulet and Charm,  
 That would do neither good nor harm:  
 In *Rosy-Crucian* Lore learned,  
 As he that *Verè adeptus* earned.  
 He understood the speech of Birds  
 As well as they themselves do words:  
 Could tell what subtlest *Parrots* mean,  
 That speak and think contrary clean;<sup>9</sup>

9. *Ibid.*, pt. 1, canto I, 527–544.

Most of the references here are to the Rosicrucians. *Floud* is Robert Fludd (1574–1637), the well-known hermetic philosopher who wrote several works defending the Rosicrucians. *Anthroposophus* is Thomas Vaughan (1622–1666), author of *Anthroposophia Theomagica* and publisher of an English translation of the principal Rosicrucian documents, the *Fama* and *Confessio*, in 1652. *Jacob Behmen* is Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), who was linked in the English mind with German Rosicrucianism. John Webster, the Paracelsian chemist, refers, for example, to the “divinely-inspired Teutonic Boehme” as possessing the same secret as the “highly illuminated fraternity of the Rosy Crosse” concerning “the language of nature.”<sup>10</sup>

But there are yet further elements in the passage—“Th’Intelligible world,” “the speech of Birds,” and “subtlest Parrots”—that we know Butler elsewhere associated with the kind of “Rosy-Crucian Lore” Ralpho professes:

The Brethren of the Rosy-Cross...are better acquainted with the Intelligible World, than they are with this; and understand more of Ideas, than they do of Things. This intelligible World is a kind of *Terra incognita*, a Psittacorum Regio [“Region of the Parrots”], of which Men talk what they do not understand...they profess to understand the Language of Beasts and Birds, as they say Solomon did, else he would never have said—The Fowls of the Air can discover Treason against Princes.<sup>11</sup>

Given, then, that the bulk of the quoted passage from *Hudibras* is to be understood as constructing a Rosicrucian identity for Independent Ralpho (who is Butler’s symbol for Cromwellians), the logic is inescapable: to this influential contemporary, Cromwellians were Rosicrucians. And Rosicrucians—to this contemporary—represented the unfortunate emergence of the age-old esoteric tradition. In a footnote to the Ralpho passage, Butler writes,

The Fraternity of the Rosy-Crucians is very like the Sect of the anti-ent Gnostici who called themselves so, from the excellent Learning they pretended to, although they were really the most ridiculous Sots

10. Quoted by Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, chapter 13.

11. Samuel Butler, *Characters. op. cit.*, pp. 144–146.

of all Mankind. Vere Adeptus, is one that has Commenc'd in their Fanatique extravagance.<sup>12</sup>

There we have it, then. For Butler, the Cromwellian era in English history was a Rosicrucian episode, an unwelcome emergence of the age-old esoteric tradition into political and cultural expression.

One does not imagine that Butler's representation of Cromwellians as Rosicrucians came as news to his Restoration readers. Rather, his enormous popularity probably springs from his having articulated, for the Royalists, "what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed." But Cromwellians were not called Rosicrucians only by others; they said it of themselves, too.

As tutor to Cromwell's ward for several years in the mid 1650s and a member of Cromwell's government from 1657, Andrew Marvell (1621–1678) was to be found at the highest reaches of Cromwellian society, as one of the two great writers at the Rosicrucian-Cromwellian center, the other being Marvell's great friend John Milton (1608–1674). Both had strong Rosicrucian sympathies, as we shall see. But that is not all. Andrew Marvell, as we shall also see, appear to have represented himself as a Rosicrucian and written for a Rosicrucian fraternity who saw to it that his poems—unpublished and uncirculated in his lifetime—would be published after his death under a Rosicrucian imprimatur. It is likely that John Milton, whose writings of the 1630s and 1640s show a strong interest in hermeticism, formed part of this fraternity: he and Marvell were close friends who worked together in Cromwell's government during the mid-1650s, and friends who walked together, with Rosicrucian-linked Hartlib, in Cromwell's funeral procession in 1658. Their writings are likely to repay the closest scrutiny in any attempt to understand the political and philosophic concerns of the hermetic tradition in its Rosicrucian phase.

Marvell's friendship with Milton—although documented earliest in a letter of 1653, in which Milton proposes Marvell for a government post—probably goes back to the 1640s. The mother of Cyriack Skinner, Milton's pupil in London from about 1643 onward, was a close friend of the Marvell family in Yorkshire. Cyriack and Andrew would have been childhood friends. On his return to London from four years' travel abroad during the mid-1640s, it would have been natural for Andrew to contact Cyriack, now

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12. Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*. *op. cit.*, Butler's note to pt. 1, canto I, 527–544.

part of the Milton circle, members of which would thenceforth become Marvell's lifelong friends. Milton's circle included Hartlib, whom Yates has shown to have emerged from a Rosicrucian background. It also included Robert Boyle (the brother of Milton's very close friend Lady Ranelagh) whom likewise Yates has shown, through his letters of 1646–1647, to have been in contact with a Rosicrucian-sounding "invisible college." John Pell, who had dedicated his pansophic tract "An Idea of Mathematicks" to Hartlib in 1639, was another member of this circle and one whom, Aubrey notes, "was one of [Marvell's] acquaintance."<sup>13</sup> In Pell's case we may trace the roots of this Parliamentary group back to the "Rosicrucian" world of John Dee: Walter Warner, one of the earl of Northumberland's "three magi" was a friend of Pell, and Northumberland ("the wizard earl" living at Syon House, close to Dee's Mortlake residence) was an associate of Dee.<sup>14</sup> In short, Marvell would appear to have been part of a Parliamentary circle with Rosicrucian sympathies in late 1640s London.

In 1650, we get a clearer sighting of Andrew Marvell, again in Parliamentary hermetic company. In that year, Thomas Lord Fairfax resigned his post as commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary forces and retired to Appleton House in Yorkshire to work on his translations connected with the hermetic tradition, leaving the political center stage to Cromwell, his former lieutenant.<sup>15</sup> Fairfax took Andrew Marvell with him, as languages tutor to his daughter, Mary, and no doubt as intellectual companionship for himself. How the two men arrived at this arrangement before leaving London together is not exactly known, but presumably it was in connection with the hermetic Parliamentary circle of John Milton, an admirer of Fairfax who had written a panegyric sonnet on him, in August 1648, beginning "Fairfax, whose name in arms through Europe rings."

Marvell was to remain with Fairfax in Yorkshire for two or three years, where he is presumed to have written much of the lyrical poetry for which he is now so widely appreciated. In his major poem, "Upon Appleton House, to My Lord Fairfax," Marvell acknowledges his hermetic friendship

13. John Aubrey (1626–1697), *Brief Lives*. The quotation is discussed by M. C. Bradbrook and M. G. Lloyd Thomas, *Andrew Marvell*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1940, p. 15.

14. Lyndy Abraham, *Marvell and Alchemy*, Menston, England: Scholar Press, 1990, p. 14.

15. For Fairfax's hermetic interests, see Maren-Sofie Rostvig, "Upon Appleton House," in *Marvell: Modern Judgments*, edited by Michael Wilding, London: 1969, pp. 215–232.



with Fairfax in a number of ways. Basically, the strategy of the poem is to use the house, gardens, fields, woods, and river of the Appleton estate to provide a framework for a series of meditations on the civil war, the execution of Charles I, and the role of the Fairfax family in promoting the Protestant health of England. In the "wood-section," Marvell begins to hint lightly at arcane studies undertaken or continued at Appleton that have made of him a Sybil and a seer, or something akin to an ancient Druid—for noting how the falling oak leaves have accidentally embroidered upon him the semblance of an ancient Druid's cope, he observes: "And see how Chance's better Wit / Could with a Mask my studies hit!" (*Appleton House*, lines 585–586).

What Druidic studies were these? The following couplet provides a clue:

Thrice happy he who, not mistook,  
Hath read in *Nature's mystick Book*.

(lines 583–584)

Here we have the divinely written Book of Nature, the astrological deciphering of which was a chief aim of the Protestant Reformation according to Melancthon and other leading German writers, as we have seen. Significantly, for both Marvell and the Rosicrucian manifestos, the Book is deemed difficult to read. Indeed, Marvell's thought—that only those "not mistook" may benefit from reading it—may derive directly from his reading of the first Rosicrucian manifesto, the *Fama Fraternitatis* of 1614, which states, "Although that great book of nature stands open to all men, yet there are few that can read and understand the same."

The "thrice happy of these lines suggests the presence of "thrice-great" Hermes (Trismegistus), who was the subject of Marvell's patron's studies—hermetic studies that no doubt he shared with Marvell, judging from the affectionate reference to the River Warfe, which runs through the Appleton estate, as "our little Nile" (stanza 79) later in the poem. (The hermetic corpus was believed at this time to be a compilation of wisdom literature from the land of the Nile.)

The hermetic-Rosicrucian context of these lines on the Book of Nature is strengthened further by the presence of an identical context for the neighboring lines (551–554). A woodpecker has discovered a rotten oak (allegorically, the royal oak, Charles I) and has toppled it with his beak:

Who could have thought the *tallest* Oak  
 Should fall by such a *feeble Strok*!  
 Nor would it, had the Tree not fed  
 A *Traitor-worm*, within it bred.

(*ibid.*, lines 551–586)

These lines would appear to be a dramatization of Solomon's dictum "*The Fowls of the Air can discover Treason against Princes*," a dictum that Butler said was beloved by Rosicrucians, as we have seen (*supra* page 227). Thus, when Marvell tells us in the next stanza that he is that kind of "Philosopher" who understands the speech of birds and trees—"Thus I, *easie Philosopher*,/ Among the *Birds* and *Trees* confer" (again in line with Butler's depiction of Rosicrucians as those who professed "to understand the Language of Beasts and Birds") we may be sure that Marvell is describing himself as a Rosicrucian.

When Marvell's poems were eventually published, three years after his death in 1678, the book in which they appeared, *Miscellaneous Poems* (1681), bore the identifying mark of the Rosicrucians, "C Ros.," approximating the rule given in the Rosicrucian *Fama* that "The word C. R. should be their seal, mark and character." The publisher, Robert Boulter (named on the title page), had previously acted as Milton's publisher for the first edition of *Paradise Lost*—a man whose fraternal cooperation could be relied upon in the technical matter of adjusting the collation, signature, and catchword of page 5 so as to place there, innocently hidden in plain view, the sign and seal of Christian Rosenkreutz:

Such did the Manna's sacred Dew destil;  
 White, and intire, though congeal'd and chill.  
 Congeal'd on Earth: but does, dissolving, run  
 Into the Glories of th' Almighty Sun,

C Ros.<sup>16</sup>

There can be little doubt that this conjunction of the signature "C" and catchword "Ros.," which appears in all known collations of *Miscellaneous Poems*, is a deliberate device to signal the Rosicrucian provenance of this text. First, we should consider that this typographic effect has

16. Andrew Marvell, *Miscellaneous Poems 1681: A Scholar Press Facsimile*. Menston, England: Scholar Press, 1973.

been achieved only by a deliberate disruption of the normal collation, which, starting from signature "D" runs "D," "D2," blank, blank, "E," "E2," blank, blank, "F," "F2," blank, blank, and so on, representing a normal gather of two sheets, printed on both sides, gathered and folded to create eight pages per gather (with the signature appearing at the foot of the right-hand pages to safeguard the register, or correct order). Single gathers are used prior to "D." In other words, having achieved the required conjunction of "C Ros." the printer is then immediately free to proceed according to his normal rule of double gathers. Second, we should consider that the manipulation of the printer's signature to provide a cryptic identifying device may be met with in the earlier history of Rosicrucian printing. William Sherman, writing on John Dee, whose involvement with the formative, prenatal phase of Rosicrucian activity is well established, tells us that

Dee's printed works are littered with self-referential devices which range from the blatant to the cryptic. His "Mathematical Praeface" to the first English translation of Euclid in 1570, for instance, opens with a huge initial D—in which, to make sure the pun was not missed, he added his delta, his hieroglyphical monad, and a version of his coat of arms. In the same text there is a more subtle device: the signatures run from *a* to *d* and then begin again with *A*.<sup>17</sup>

Third, we should consider that the poem "On a Drop of Dew" and its Latin version, *Ros* ("Dew"), which are printed on the pages that the "C Ros" device co-identifies, take as their subject *dew*, which has a special significance for the Rosicrucian tradition. The title page of Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564), bears the quotation: "DE RORE CAELI, ET PINGVEDINE TERRAE, DET TIBI DEUS. Gen. 27" (God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth). And this quotation also appears on the verso side of the title page of the publication that contains the first edition of the second Rosicrucian manifesto, the *Confessio* (1615).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Marvell's use of the dew image—as a microcosmic

17. William Sherman, *John Dee*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, p. 10.

18. See Frances Yates, *op. cit.*, chapter 4.

image of the macrocosm from which it descends—is entirely in keeping with the Rosicrucian worldview.

It would appear, then, that the device “C Ros.” genuinely signals Marvell’s membership of a Rosicrucian fraternity, whose presence is hinted at in “Appleton House” and is to be seen here supervising the posthumous publication of his poems.

It is not possible here, alas, to comment in detail on Rosicrucian literary constructs, neither those of Milton nor of Marvell—for such commentary needs a more spacious home than the confines of this essay. But insofar as Marvell’s most popular poem (“To His Coy Mistress”) may be shown to be rooted in the Rosicrucian *Fama*, it is useful to demonstrate it here in order to establish further, and without doubt, the Rosicrucian affiliation of this inner circle member of the 1650s government.

The *Fama* claims that the spherical knowledge peculiar to the Rosicrucians enables them to transcend the ordinary boundaries of space and time by allowing them to stand at the common center and be aware of all that comes within its orb:

Were it not a precious thing that you could always live so, as if you had lived from the beginning of the world, and, moreover, as you should still live to the end thereof? Were it not excellent you dwell in one place, that neither the people which dwell beyond the River Ganges in the Indies could hide anything, nor those which live in Peru might be able to keep secret their counsels from thee?

This, surely, is Marvell’s source for “Coy Mistress,” combining as it does, like Marvell’s poem, a reference to the River Ganges with the idea of exploring expanded time and space.

Had we but World enough and Time,  
This coyness Lady were no crime.  
We would sit down, and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long Loves Day.  
Thou by the *Indian Ganges’* side  
Should’st Rubies find: I by the Tide  
Of *Humber* would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood:

And you should if you please refuse  
Till the Conversion of the *Jews*.

Certainly there are differences between the two texts. Marvell substitutes for "Peru" his Yorkshire "Humber" and fleshes out the *Fama*'s "from the beginning of the world ... to the end thereof" with its biblical approximates ("Flood" and "Conversion of the *Jews*"). But the underlying commonality remains. The parallelism of thought and language between these passages from the *Fama* and "Coy Mistress" is too close to deny their familial connection or to deny that the intimacy that Marvell seeks under the figure of amorous adoration through great stretches of space and time—"Vaster than Empires, and more slow"—is in reality an intimacy with the kind of "gnosis" that the Rosicrucian manifesto vouchsafes to its adherents and said to be achieved by that same imaginative immersion in expanded time and space that Marvell here depicts.

Rosicrucian gnosis—what is it? Again and again in this essay, and others like it, we observe from outside the conduit pipes running through time and space—from Dee's England to Bohemia and back to Cromwell's England via the Hague—but we do not drink the hidden elixir, which it is their purpose to protect and channel. Must it always be so? Must we always plod like weary pack animals through a wilderness traversed by historical pipelines? No. Even pack animals must drink from time to time. Let us rest a minute and tap the pipe before going on.

In Giordano Bruno's *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, Sophia pours out something of the hermetic knowledge:

God ... is in all things.... Thus one should think of Sol as being in a crocus, a daffodil, a sunflower, in the cock, in the lion; and thus one should conceive of each of the gods through each of the species.... For as the divinity descends in a certain manner inasmuch as it communicates itself to nature, so there is an ascent made to the divinity through nature. Thus through the light which shines in natural things one mounts up to the life which presides over them.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Quoted by F. E. Manuel and F. P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1979, p. 230; compare Böhme, who also writes about the light of nature in terms of astrological signatures.

God is in everything, enlivening all via the sun and other "astrological" vivifiers. That is the heart of the matter. And as the Rosicrucian *Confessio* says, those who can read and use those living signs, "those great letters and characters which the Lord God hath written and imprinted in heaven and earth's edifice ... the same is already (although as yet unknown to himself) ours."

Bruno's speaker (Sophia) is feminine. The gnosis that Marvell courts—his coy Rosicrucian mistress—is feminine. The macrocosmic presence (Mary) at the end of "Appleton House" is feminine. The Rosicrucian *Fama* genders its philosophy as feminine:

Our Philosophy also is not a new invention, but as Adam after his fall received it, and as Moses and Solomon used it. Also she ought not much to be doubted of, or contradicted by other opinions, or meanings; but seeing truth is peaceable, brief, and always like herself in all things, and especially accorded by with *Jesus in omni parte* and all members. And as he is the true Image of the Father, so is she his Image. It shall not be said, this is true according to Philosophy but false in Theology. (*Fama*, ad finem)

Who this female is we shall see in a moment. But first, let us use this passage to unveil another Rosicrucian mind at the court of Cromwell: that of John Milton, who became secretary for foreign tongues on March 13, 1649 and remained in that post throughout the 1650s. Milton clearly uses this passage from the *Fama* as the basis for that lovely passage in the *Areopagitica* (1643) where he speaks, similarly, of that ancient truth, female in gender, a battered image here below of that "ascended" image of Jesus and the apostles above, ideally to be seen as "homogeneous" (or "like herself in all things") and not to be thought of as true in one field but false in another:

Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on; but when He ascended and His Apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who as that story goes of the *Egyptian Typhoon* with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good *Osiris*, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces,

and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that *Isis* made for the mangled body of *Osiris*, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could best find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection.... They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect and permit not others to unite those dis severed pieces which are yet wanting to the body of Truth. To be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is *homogeneous*, and proportional) this is the golden rule i.e. in *theology* as well as in arithmetick and makes up the best harmony in a Church; not the forc'd and outward union of cold and neutral and inwardly divided minds.

In reworking the passage from the *Fama* (mainly by interfusing it with the Egyptian hermetic story of *Isis*, which was doubtless told again by his friends in Yorkshire as they sat by the banks of "our little Nile"), Milton demonstrates his ideological roots in Rosicrucianism, which he sees here—in this recommendation to the "Lords and Commons" of Parliament—as providing a better church for his country than that cold ecclesiastical prison house favored by the more orthodox minds of his day.

But who is this female, truth, whom he and the whole hermetic Rosicrucian tradition would have us discover? She is not Woman, the childbearer and mother, nor Lady Venus with her delightful wanton ways, nor some vague all-embracing Great Goddess. Precisely, she is the Virgin—what Milton calls "the virgin Truth," what Marvell refers to in "Coy Mistress" as "that long preserv'd Virginity," and what in *Appleton House* he figures under the image of a twelve- or thirteen-year-old virgin, Mary Fairfax. Presumably this is not the Catholic Virgin Mary—who to Rosicrucian eyes is but an aspect of the Virgin—but the zodiacal Virgin, Virgo, whose traditional planetary "ruler" is none other than Mercury, who is Hermes.

Truth is a hermetic matter. It has to be pieced together from scattered clues. The world—as early Protestant philosophers from Melancthon to Newton recognized—is a divine cryptogram, which it is the task of the esoteric tradition to decrypt. One may learn some of the principles involved

from its teachers—from the Bruno passage, for example—but finally adeptship is a matter of personal perception, not rote learning. As Marvell stands in the green temple of the Appleton woods, with the light of the sun dappling through the leaves, he perceives as realities that which tradition has taught him:

What Rome, Greece, Palestine, ere said

I in this light Mosaik read.

Thrice happy he who, not mistook,

Hath read in Natures mystick Book.

(*Appleton House*, lines 581–584)

No priest or prelate will teach you these hermetic things. Marvell and Milton knew that. And therefore they were against priests and prelates being given authority in spiritual matters. Under Cromwell, they had their way. Bishops were banned and congregations were allowed to choose their own ministers. Liberty of conscience and religious toleration—though not extended to popery—were specific provisions of the 1655 “Instrument” of government so carefully prepared for Cromwell’s protectorate. Parliament’s Reformation—perhaps *the* Reformation—was not about replacing one form of spiritual ignorance and tyranny (Catholicism) with another (Anglicanism or whatever), but about pursuing for oneself the true spiritual knowledge that, for many Protestants, might best be found in the hermetic tradition incorporating Christianity properly understood. Only when Protestant Fairfax and Marvell undertook their hermetic and Rosicrucian studies at Appleton House (formerly a nunnery) could it be said that “though many a *Nun* there made her Vow, / ’Twas no *Religious House* till now” (*ibid.*, 279–280).

England was not going to become a truly Protestant land by simply replacing the pope with a monarch, dissolving the monasteries, and relabeling the church “Anglican.” The Reformation had to be driven farther. Only Independency in spiritual matters would do. And so the Parliamentarians (principally Presbyterians and Independents) drove out the Royalists (principally Anglicans), whose religion was virtually indistinguishable from Catholicism. And when that did not go far enough, the Independents drove out the Presbyterians until only Independency remained. Yes, the Bible should be studied (Cromwell made it a priority to ensure that every school



and parish had it in English translation), but the Bible, correctly understood, formed part of the esoteric tradition. The new age announced by the Rosicrucians was readily assimilable to the millennium announced in the Bible. And since the Bible suggested that the new age would not come until the conversion of the Jews, Cromwell lifted the 360-year-old ban on Jews residing in England, in which illumined land they might readily convert. Marvell's coy mistress, Sophia, could refuse only "till the Conversion of the Jews," and that time, perhaps, was near. The "last Age," perhaps, was about to show its "Heart" a purified "Time" that the virgin Sophia-Mary is envisaged bringing in at the end of "Appleton House," by whose "*Flames, in Heaven try'd, / Nature is wholly vitrifi'd*"—that is, made like the crystalline spheres above in a final matching harmony of macrocosm and microcosm. If this reading of history was correct, reasoned the Parliamentary Rosicrucians, then Cromwell—likewise, the force of "Heaven's flame"—might bring about that longed-for purification.<sup>20</sup>

But a thick Cloud about that Morning dyes,  
And intercepts the Beams of Mortal eyes,  
That 'tis the most which we determine can,  
If these the Times, then this must be the Man.

The poem from which these lines are taken—"The First Anniversary of the government under His Highness the Lord Protector"—was published anonymously in 1655 as government publicity. It was advertised in the government's weekly periodical, *Mercurius Politicus* (no. 240, January 11–18, 1655) and was printed by Thomas Newcomb, the government printer. The precise date of publication was January 17, 1655, as recorded by the contemporary bookseller, Thomason.<sup>21</sup> The precise dating is important, because it strengthens the view that this poem was carefully scripted to represent government ideology. On that date, January 17, 1655, Parliament presented to Cromwell what it called the "Instrument" (of government), a document with which Parliament had been almost exclusively preoccupied

20. "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," *Andrew Marvell, Miscellaneous Poems 1681: A Scolar Press Facsimile*, op. cit.

21. John M. Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Royalism of Andrew Marvell*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 107.

since it first met, as the first parliament of the protectorate, in September 1654.<sup>22</sup> The principal image of the poem closely reflects Parliament's focus upon the "Instrument" presented to Cromwell. It compares Cromwell, tuning "the ruling Instrument" to create the commonwealth, with Amphion striking the lute to create Thebes, huge blocks of stone forming themselves into walls at its sound. The synchronization of poetic and political purpose could not be clearer. On the day upon which Cromwell is given the political Instrument, a government poem is released to celebrate his mastery of it. And since the poem is Rosicrucian and hermetic in lineage, we may rightly think of its government sponsors as Rosicrucian hermeticists, too.

But in what sense is the poem hermetic-Rosicrucian? First, it suggests that insofar as Cromwell is "our Amphion," he is inspired by Hermes, for it was Hermes, as Marvell's editors tell us, who was "the God" who gave Amphion the lute:

So when *Amphion* did the Lute command,  
Which the God gave him, with his gentle hand,  
The rougher Stones, unto his Measures hew'd.<sup>23</sup>

Second, like the Rosicrucian manifestos, it places the highest value upon the task of creating here on earth an attuned microcosmic image of the surrounding sphere, or macrocosm. Thus, just as Christian Rosenkreutz was said to have created his tomb as a microcosm of the greater celestial order, and just as the drop of dew ("ros") was honored by the Rosicrucians for imaging below the surrounding sphere above, so Cromwell is shown as one who

cuts his way still nearer to the Skyes,  
Learning a Musique in the Region clear,  
To tune this lower to that higher Sphere.

A third reason for identifying the poem as a Rosicrucian artifact is that it later appears in a book that bears the Rosicrucian seal, the *Miscellaneous*

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22. My source for the January date is a conversation with Dr. Joad Raymond, University of Aberdeen, who is currently working with the primary sources.

23. *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, vol. 1, edited by H. M. Margoliouth, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 321.

*Poems* (1681) discussed earlier, where its author is revealed to be Andrew Marvell. But we should not allow ourselves to be distracted by its famous authorship into thinking the poem an independently constructed piece. When it first appeared, anonymously, this Rosicrucian poem spoke for a Rosicrucian government. Both poem and government were concerned with the “ruling Instrument” (line 68), and both poem and “Instrument” were published on the same day. It signaled that Cromwellian England would now dance to its Rosicrucian pipers, firmly installed at the highest reaches of government.

In brief, “The First Anniversary” expresses the hope and belief that Hermes had given Cromwell the means to accomplish the Rosicrucian purpose of bringing in the new age to which, like the Rosicrucian manifestos themselves, this poem looks with an air of expectation. The legal and musical Instrument that Parliament presented to “our *Amphion*” on January 17, 1655 was crafted with that same purpose and expectation in mind. But was Cromwell adept enough to play it?

Cromwell was a soldier who became a military leader. As Marvell’s “Horatian Ode” tells us, he had burst through his own Parliamentary side in armor and corselet, urging his active star “through adventurous War” until “*Caesar’s* head at last / Did through his Laurels blast.” That he was also a devout Puritan was clear to all. But there is no evidence of which I am aware—as there is for other leading Parliamentarians (Whitelocke, Fairfax, Milton, and Marvell)—that he had assimilated the hermetic worldview. And if he had not, then the most that his Rosicrucian circle could hope, perhaps, was that heaven and Hermes knew what they were doing if Cromwell himself did not. This was the hope that sustained this circle for a while. In gaining power, Cromwell had drawn down the “force of angry Heaven’s flame.” What next might heaven do through this man? Might it speed through him its ancient alchemical purpose and through him bring “the mysterious Work” to its golden-age conclusion, “and soon precipitate the latest Day”? In this hope, Cromwell’s Rosicrucian supporters had fashioned for him a hermetic lute that would tune the polity to the skies above. They had handed it to him, as we shall see, on perhaps the most significant date in their hermetic calendar.

But he could not play it. Moreover, he despised it—and despised the deliberations that had gone into making it. Five days later, on January 22, 1655, impatient with their procedural concerns, Cromwell dismissed

Parliament and ruled alone. He would not call another until 1656. Two years after that, he was dead.

In the year following his death, the Rosicrucian hope kindled again. The interregnum political theorist Harrington set up a political debating club, the Rota club—"Rota" not simply in honor of his scheme for rotating members of Parliament out of office, a third at a time, but also in honor surely of the ideal governing instrument under which the Rosicrucian Brothers were said to operate. They had called it, in the *Fama*, "our *Rotam*" and regulated their lives by it. Cyriack Skinner, a close—and undoubtedly fraternal—friend of Marvell and Milton, was its chairman, as Aubrey tells us.<sup>24</sup> For a few months debate and hopes ran high. New political schemes were aired, but when the king came in in 1660 (as Aubrey says), all such airy schemes had to be put aside.

If the tuning of the political microcosm to the heavenly macrocosm was not accomplished in seventeenth-century England, the tuning of the literary microcosm most certainly was. There, at least, the magnificent Rosicrucian design was fully modeled. Both Marvell and Milton constructed numerous literary microcosms of the Rosicrucian sphere. However, the encoding procedures are too technically complex and the material encoded too diverse to cover here in detail.

Nevertheless, we may glance briefly at two of Milton's pieces, the twin poems "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," and quickly sketch in the broad outlines of their cosmological design. As Alistair Fowler first recognized (though without giving any explanation for it), the midsections of each of these poems contain references to the Little Bear (Cynosure) and the Great Bear (the Bear), respectively.<sup>25</sup> In fact, we may add, these ursine references are slightly offset from the exact mathematical centers—one above it, the other below—to a degree that reflects the actual cosmological circumstances Milton envisaged and upon which he modeled these two poems. The heavenly sphere revolves upon an axis that passes through the North and South poles of our planet, the North Pole extended between the Bears. Superimposing one poem upon the other reproduces the sphere in miniature. And superimposing one poem upon the other, the battlemented tower that appears at the exact center of the first is occupied by "thrice great *Hermes*"

24. Anthony Powell, *John Aubrey and His Friends*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1948, p. 94.

25. Alistair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 116.

at the exact center of the second, where he acts as Milton's guide to the surrounding spheres above, perceived as having a mysterious commerce with the earth below. Milton's source for the hermetic arrangement of these bear-centered poems was the hermetic corpus, where the Rosicrucian god himself explains the meaning of the center he here inhabits:

*Hermes:* Look at the Great Bear and the Little Bear. As you see they neither set nor rise; are they moved, think you?

*Asclepius:* They are moved, Trismegistus.

*Hermes:* And of what kind is their movement?

*Asclepius:* It is a movement which circles round one point.

*Hermes:* Yes, and their revolution round one point is a movement that is held fast by immobility.<sup>26</sup>

This "immobility," Hermes reveals, is the divine center, "Him who is unmoved moving in all that moves" but also "Him who is hidden made manifest through his works!" (*Ibid.*, p. 65). The precise way in which Milton's companion poems order their material to reproduce this hidden manifestation of the divine is, as I have said, too lengthy a matter for investigation here, but I hope I have said enough to suggest the conclusion that, in poetry as in politics, Milton's concern was to attune the microcosm to the macrocosm in a manner made vivid to him by the hermetic Rosicrucian tradition.

Milton's hermetic bears and the government's Rosicrucian "Instrument" dated January 17 provide a link forward to, and help to validate the claims of, a twentieth-century Rosicrucian group, the Priory of Sion, which has become widely known through the labors of Henry Lincoln and his co-authors.<sup>27</sup> This group, subtitled the "Order of the Rose-Cross," claims an unbroken sequence of grandmasters running from the early Middle Ages to the present day, including such notables as the alchemist Nicolas Flamel (grandmaster 1398–1418), Robert Fludd (grandmaster 1595–1637), J. Valentin Andreae (grandmaster 1637–1654), Robert Boyle (grandmaster 1654–1691), and Isaac Newton (grandmaster 1691–1727). As readers of Lincoln's book will know, both the bear insignia and the

26. W. Scott, *Hermetica*, London: Solos Press, 1992, p. 56.

27. Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, New York: Dell, 1983.

January 17 badge-date of this group form strong identifying motifs within the Priory of Sion's account of its historical mission, and the further presence of these motifs independently demonstrated here in the Rosicrucian material connected with the court of Cromwell suggests that we should take its claims to antiquity quite seriously. Certainly, whoever put together its list of grandmasters had a profound knowledge of the esoteric tradition, sufficient to link these men in a very plausible and thought-provoking chain. The link, for example, between the arch-Rosicrucian Andreae and Robert Boyle, the self-confessed associate of what looks very much like a 1640s Rosicrucian group in London is quite credible, given Boyle's membership in Milton's circle, which included Hartlib, a disciple of Andreae.

It was Milton's circle, one imagines—for there was none higher in parliamentary affairs—that chose January 17 as the date for its Rosicrucian "Instrument" of government of 1655. And in doing so, we may speculate, it sought to give that government an amulet forged from its own Rosicrucian traditions. Here at last was the alchemical republic, a government destined to accomplish the Great Work that would turn the very age to gold and "soon precipitate the latest Day" (*First Anniversary*, line 140). What better date to speed success than that great day of alchemical precipitation upon which Nicolas Flamel, the medieval alchemist claimed as an early grandmaster of this group—if Lincoln's Sion (Northumberland's Syon?) be allowed to stand—first precipitated alchemical silver? A document dated 1624, and discussed in a book quite independent of Lincoln's, tells:

Then the first time that I made projection was upon mercury whereof I turned half a pound, or thereabouts, unto pure silver, better than that of the mine, as I myself assayed, and made others assay many times. This was upon a Monday, the seventeenth of January, about noon, in my house, Perenelle [his wife] only being present, in the year of the restoring of mankind, 1382.<sup>28</sup>

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28. Kenneth Raynor Johnson, *The Fulcanelli Phenomenon: The Story of a Twentieth-century Alchemist in the Light of New Examination of the Hermetic Tradition*, Jersey: Neville Spearman, 1980, p. 308. Translated from a certain Orandus.

But that is not all. This same date will soon reappear as a key date within the calendar of the successor movement to seventeenth-century Rosicrucianism: Freemasonry.

With the restoration of monarchy in 1660, the Rosicrucians moved from center stage into the wings (not, as Butler would have it, into the skies), merging with modern Freemasonry to continue their historic mission of forwarding the hermetic tradition into whatever channels of activity might be open to it.

As orthodox Anglican Royalists turned Tory and unorthodox Parliamentarians turned Whig, the currents of political hermeticism (Rosicrucianism) naturally ran in the Whig stream, as Margaret Jacob, who forwards the Yatesian thesis into the eighteenth century, has shown.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, "some contemporaries in the 1690s called the Whigs and their Rose Club, 'Rosicrucians.'"<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, when Whig fortunes sufficiently revived, the Whig-dominated Grand Lodge of Freemasons emerged in 1717 to consolidate the Rosicrucian-Freemasonic position.

It is not the purpose of this essay to follow Rosicrucian political fortunes into their new Freemasonic lands, whether in Europe, America or Russia. Suffice it to say that Freemasonry decisively furthered the Rosicrucian program of the Cromwellian era by spreading its hermetic and republican message throughout the Protestant empire in the eighteenth century, a period in which "we find Continental freemasons, writing in French in the 1770s and 1780s, telling themselves that Cromwell was the founder of modern freemasonry."<sup>31</sup> He probably wasn't, but those close to him probably were. Six years after its formation in 1717, on January 17, 1723, the Grand Lodge formally approved its instrument of government, the *Constitutions* compiled by Brother James Anderson, which would become a model for all Freemasonry of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.<sup>32</sup>

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29. Margaret Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981; see also Jacob's *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

30. Margaret Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 117. No doubt the same connotations were attached to the name of the house on Bread Street in London where Milton lived in the 1630s and 1640s—the "Rose." See W. R. Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 997.

31. Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, p. 24.

32. The January 17 date is given by Horia Nestorescu-Balcesti, *Ordinal Masonic Roman* (The Romanian Masonic Order), Bucharest, 1993, p. 41.

The date of approval confirms the continuity between the 1650s English Rosicrucians and their successors, the Grand Lodge Freemasons. The Rosicrucian "Instrument" presented to Oliver Cromwell sixty-eight years earlier, on that same day, would, in this newer version, find a truer Amphion to strike its strings: the worldwide brotherhood of Freemasonry.

What kind of fish have we caught in the net? In summary, the story is this. Yates has described the main political conduits of the Rosicrucian ideology in Protestant Europe from about 1560 to 1660, and we have here strengthened her suggestion that Interregnum England provided another such cultural and political milieu for this ideology before its incorporation into Freemasonry, a movement that, thanks to the work of Margaret Jacob and others, has now been recognized as a mainstream force in creating Enlightenment patterns of political and cultural life.

The nature of the Protestant Rosicrucian ideology thus channeled principally concerns a cosmological understanding of the world in terms of the "astrological" signatures by which the divine mind was thought to have written the Book of Nature, a book that in turn may be read by those initiated into the esoteric tradition that collects and transmits these readings. This ideology or religion—we may call it the hermetic tradition—is probably to be identified as a significant cause of the Protestant Reformation in its drive to create a culture based on a truer perception of the divine than its traditional rival, the Christian ecclesiastical tradition, though both honored the Bible as a source of spiritual illumination (the former, no doubt, for its esoteric cosmological content and the latter for its exoteric, personalized content). The works of Marvell, Milton, and others constitute the ideological artifacts that both preserve and allow access to the formidable body of esoteric learning transmitted by the hermetic tradition, the details of which need to be evaluated elsewhere. It behoves us, then, to return our fish to the surging sea and follow him to his school.

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NOTE: The material published here is my first attempt in print to substantiate my controversial argument that Andrew Marvell was a Rosicrucian. This argument was launched at a major international conference on Andrew Marvell in June 1996 at London University. I was prevented from completing my paper (15 minutes into my agreed time of 30 minutes) by my chair (Professor Lyndy



Abraham of the University of New South Wales) and by the organizer of the conference (Professor Warren Chernaik of London University). About half of the audience walked out in protest at what I can only assume was an unwelcome and “heretical” view of the poet upon whose reputation their professional lives depend. An account of the controversy was published in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in July 1996. A few weeks later I received an invitation from the Council of the Royal Society of Arts to become a Fellow. The invitation did not say why, but as the letter addressed me in the same (but, in fact, incorrect) way that the *Times Higher* had incorrectly styled me, I knew it was in connection with the controversy. The RSA would not wish to comment on the rightness of my argument, I’m sure. The *Times Higher* account ends “The conference ended with Mr. Bembridge determined to fight for his views.”

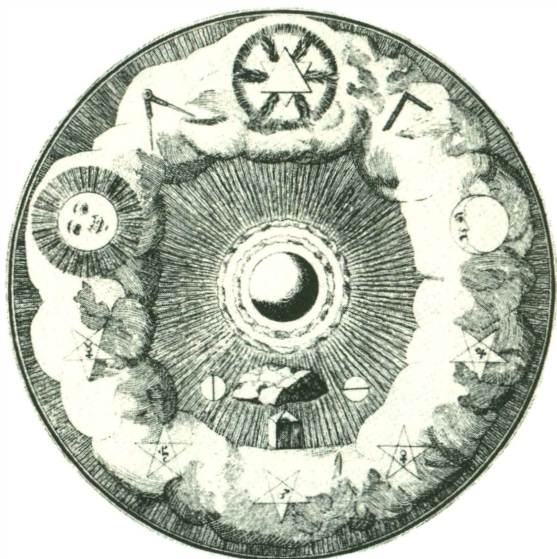


*Rosa, Innocentia Vindicata*, 1695.

9.

*The Rosicrucian  
Legacy*

CHRISTOPHER MCINTOSH



Ceremonial carpet used in grade two of the *Gold- und Rosenkreutz* order, from *Die theoretischen Bruder oder zweite Stufe der Rosenkreutzer*, 1785.



WOULD LIKE to begin by quoting from a short story by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, in which he brilliantly creates his own fictional version of the Rosicrucian phenomenon. The story, entitled "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," appears in the collection of his stories entitled *Labyrinths*.<sup>1</sup> It deals with a group of people who decide to create an imaginary country and to present it to the world as though it really existed. Later they decide that a single country is not enough and that they must invent an entire planet. They compile an encyclopedia about this planet, containing minutely detailed descriptions of its geography, history, customs, religions, languages, and science. Parts of this encyclopedia are then leaked out so that they begin to be quoted. Little artifacts from the imaginary world are also carefully planted—a curiously shaped compass with an inscription from one of the imaginary languages, a tiny cone made of some unknown metal, so heavy that it can hardly be lifted. Gradually this mysterious world starts to fascinate people to such an extent that the real world begins to imitate it.

When Borges wrote this story he clearly had the Rosicrucian movement in mind, because he attributes one of the books about the imaginary planet to Johann Valentin Andreae. In Borges's story the group of people behind the invention is called "Orbis Tertius," the "Third Sphere." His account of its emergence is as follows:

One night in Lucerne or London, in the early seventeenth century, the splendid history has its beginning. A secret and benevolent society... arose to invent a country. Its vague initial programme

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1. Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," translated by James E. Irby, in *Labyrinths*, edited by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby, Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970.

included 'hermetic studies', philanthropy and the cabala. From the first period dates the curious book of Andreae. After a few years of secret conclaves and premature syntheses it was understood that one generation was not sufficient to give articulate form to a country. They resolved that each of the masters should elect a disciple who would continue his work. This hereditary arrangement prevailed.

The story goes on to relate how the movement spread to America, where it was supported by an eccentric millionaire—it was he who had the idea to invent a whole planet. And toward the end of the story Borges writes: "A scattered dynasty of solitary men has changed the face of the world. Their task continues."

I quote this story for two reasons: first, because in itself it is an example of one aspect of the Rosicrucian legacy, namely, the literary legacy—the impact on writers of fiction and poetry and drama—which is enormous and which I am going to say more about later; second, Borges puts his finger on something that is essential to the Rosicrucian movement and makes it highly unusual. Here was a group of people who decided to change the world, not by force of arms or by founding a new religion or a political party, but by creating a mythology and hoping that the real world would imitate it, which in fact was what happened.

As a historian, what has always interested me is the interface between history and myth—the way in which the two are intertwined, the way myth influences history and vice versa, and the way myths have their own history and their own evolution. The questions I would like to address here concern what happened to the Rosicrucian mythology after it was created; how it was transmitted down through the centuries; what forms it took; and what its significance is for us today. First, however, we need to be clear about precisely what it was that was transmitted. I must return very briefly to where it all started.

Andreae and his friends felt that the time was ripe for a new age. European civilization had reached a critical point. The Reformation had failed to bring about the spiritual renewal that had been hoped for, Europe was bitterly divided into Catholic and Protestant camps, science and religion were drifting apart—it was obvious that something had gone wrong. So Andreae and his friends decided to express their vision for Europe in the form of an imaginary brotherhood, which they hoped would in due course attract people and so

turn into a real brotherhood. As we have seen, they skillfully wrapped this all up in a mystery and dropped this mystery into the collective mind of the age through the manifestos.

But the manifestos did not just come out of the blue. They drew upon an inner tradition of the West that had been around for a very long time. A key element of this inner tradition is what we can loosely call Gnosticism. Briefly, Gnosticism is a form of religious belief, at the core of which is a dualistic philosophy. There is not one creator of the universe but two creators—one true, the other false. The false one, the Demiurge, keeps our spirits captive in the world of matter, away from the divine light above. Through the ages, however, a certain tradition of knowledge has been handed down, veiled in imagery and symbol, telling us where we came from and how we can find our way back. This knowledge, or gnosis, can set our spirits free if we are receptive to it. This theme of Gnosticism we will find running through most of the later revivals of Rosicrucianism, as we shall see.

The theme of Gnosticism connects with another theme that is perhaps less obvious, but one that I believe is also important in Rosicrucianism. If we take the Gnostic view that the world is a sort of illusion created by the Demiurge, this does not necessarily have to be a negative, melancholy view. Why not see it as a kind of playful conjuring trick with the Demiurge as the conjurer—a conjurer whose skill we admire and applaud, knowing that sooner or later the act is going to end? Perhaps seeing the world in this playful spirit is the best way to transcend it. Consequently, there has always been, in both East and West, the tradition of the “laughing master,” the sage who transcends through humor. Humor and playfulness have always played an important part in human culture, as the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) shows in his famous book *Homo Ludens*.

It is my belief that Andreae had a strong element of the laughing master, the *homo ludens*. And I believe that this is why he referred to the Rosicrucian affair as a *ludibrium*. He did not mean a hoax or a practical joke but a creative act of playfulness in the spirit of *homo ludens*. Again, we will find that quite a number of the later avatars of Rosicrucianism can be described as laughing masters—although certainly not all of them.

Just to illustrate the importance of this theme of *homo ludens* in the Rosicrucian tradition, let me quote a passage from the great seventeenth-century thinker Jan Amos Comenius, who has often been linked to the Rosicrucian movement. Central to Comenius’s work is the concept of pansophia, universal

knowledge. In his book entitled *Pampaedia* he deals with his universal concept of education, and he writes, "It is not without reason that the school is called a place of play. This should indicate that everything in it is to be arranged as in a game, and everything should proceed in a joyful and friendly manner."<sup>2</sup> This must have been very revolutionary for its time—in fact, it would have been considered revolutionary in the schools that I myself attended.

We have now identified two important themes in Rosicrucianism: that of Gnosticism and that of *homo ludens*. Let us next take a look now at the mythological and symbolic themes in the Rosicrucian manifestos. Many of these are perennial motifs found in mythologies all over the world, as we know from the work of writers like Joseph Campbell. We have, for example, the journey of Christian Rosenkreutz to the Middle East, which represents the hero's journey that Campbell writes about, the initiatory journey from which the traveler returns transformed and in possession of new knowledge. We have the idea of a secret fraternity—as we know, people have always been fascinated and titillated by conspiracy theories. We have the symbolism of the vault, the burial place of Christian Rosenkreutz, which is a microcosm of the universe, with seven sides corresponding to the seven planets and with a miniature sun in the ceiling, containing the perfectly preserved body of Christian Rosenkreutz in his coffin. Again, there are many legends with the figure of an entombed hero, who is destined one day to be rediscovered or—in some sense—resurrected. We have, furthermore, the idea of the vault as a sort of capsule of universal knowledge, so that even if the brotherhood were to die out, the *Fama* tells us, the vault would contain everything that was necessary to reconstruct it.

The motif of the vault is one that crops up in many traditions. For example, we find a description of a vault in a mystical text from the Islamic Sufi tradition, which reads as follows:

When I wished to bring to light the science of the mystery and nature of Creation, I came upon a subterranean vault full of darkness and winds. I could see nothing because of the darkness, nor could I keep my lamp alight because of the many winds. Then a person appeared to me in my sleep in a form of the greatest beauty. He said to me:

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2. Johann Amos Comenius, *Pampaedia*. Heidelberg, Germany: Quelle und Meyer, 1965 (Latin text and German translation).

"Take a lamp and place it under a glass to shield it from the winds: then it will give thee light in spite of them. Then go into the vault; dig in its centre and from there bring forth a certain talismanic image, artfully made. When you have drawn out this image, the winds will cease to blow through the vault. Then dig in its four corners and you will bring to light the knowledge of the mysteries of Creation, the causes of Nature, the origins and qualities of things." At that I said to him: "Who then art thou?" He replied: "I am thy Perfect Nature. If thou wishest to see me, call me by my name."<sup>3</sup>

That is strikingly similar to the description of the vault in the *Fama*. The passage comes from a book called *The Aim of the Sage*, which was circulated among a Sufi sect called the Pure Brethren, who would have been active around the time that Christian Rosenkreutz was supposed to have made his journey to the Middle East. *The Aim of the Sage* was translated into Latin and printed as a book entitled *Picatrix*, which Andreae is very likely to have known about and may even have been influenced by when he wrote the *Fama*.

Perhaps the most important of all the Rosicrucian motifs is the symbol of the Rose Cross itself. The cross is a symbol that occurs in many traditions all over the world, not only within Christianity, although for Christians it obviously has a special significance. And the rose is a symbol of many things—perfection, secrecy, femininity, and, of course, in the Christian tradition, the Virgin Mary. So the Rose Cross is a powerful symbol that can be interpreted on many different levels. It is also important to point out that the symbol of the Rose Cross goes back long before Andreae and appears, for example, in medieval watermarks.

Andreae and his friends thus created a potent mixture of symbols that, when it was made public, created an enormous resonance. And very quickly things took a turn that Andreae himself found alarming. What he had intended as a symbolic and somewhat playful message to bring about a renewal of Christianity had been taken literally and turned into the great furor that we know about—which is why later in his life he backed away from the whole enterprise. Perhaps it is inevitable that a mythology, once it has been created, will take on a life of its own. And perhaps one can even

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3. Quoted by Henry Corbin in *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, translated by Nancy Pearson, New York: Omega, 1994.



speculate that Andreae and his circle, in creating the Rosicrucian mythology, were serving the needs of the age in a way that they themselves did not fully realize. This is something we will find repeatedly in the history of Rosicrucianism—that the Rosicrucian current is often carried by people and by institutions that are not aware that they are carrying it.

What happened to Rosicrucianism after the debacle of the Battle of the White Mountain? First of all, whereas originally Rosicrucianism was a holistic vision, embracing religion, science, philosophy, and politics, it began to divide into different streams: a religious stream, a scientific stream, a stream of social and political utopianism, and a hermetic stream. We find these streams flowing off in different directions, sometimes overlapping and sometimes not.

Geographically, Rosicrucianism also began to disperse. In Germany after the 1620s we hear very little about Rosicrucianism for several decades. Meanwhile, it was kept alive elsewhere, especially in Britain. During the seventeenth century, it was transmitted to Britain through a number of different channels. One possible channel was Comenius, who came to England in about the 1640s, bringing with him his concept of pansophia, which is essentially the Rosicrucian vision of a universal system of knowledge embracing all branches of human learning. During this visit he met many of the leading scientists of the time, such as the chemist Robert Boyle and the mathematician John Wilkins. The interesting thing is that these men formed a group that they called the “Invisible College,” which seems to have been a deliberate reference to Rosicrucianism. And this Invisible College later turned into the great scientific academy known as the Royal Society, which was to have a seminal influence in the development of science. Thus, very possibly it was a Rosicrucian influence, transmitted by Comenius, that led to the foundation of the Royal Society.

Another person who has been claimed as a forefather of the Royal Society is Francis Bacon, and this is borne out by a story that he wrote called *The New Atlantis* (1627), in which he describes a utopian society living on an island. This society revolves around an order called the House of Salomon, which is dedicated to the worship of God, the study of nature, brotherhood, good works, healing of the sick, and scientific research—it all sounds very Rosicrucian.

There is also an interesting possibility that Rosicrucian influences were behind the creation of speculative Freemasonry. There are a number of ways in which this might have happened and a number of people who could have been involved: Comenius himself; Robert Fludd, the alchemist and writer

who defended the Rosicrucians in a number of his works and may have been an early Freemason; Elias Ashmole, founder of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, also an alchemist and also a defender of Rosicrucianism, who we definitely know was a Freemason. It is also possible that there was a transmission through Scotland. Adam McLean has written about a Scottish hermeticist called Sir David Lindsay, who had one of the very earliest English translations of the *Fama Fraternitatis*.<sup>4</sup> And, of course, there is a long tradition stating that Scotland was the real birthplace of Freemasonry. At any rate, it's very striking that, just at the point when Rosicrucianism seemed to have been defeated in Germany, we see the mysterious emergence in Britain of speculative Masonry, as a spiritual and symbolic system, out of the old operative guild Masonry. Perhaps Rosicrucianism was the catalyst that brought this about. As possible evidence, there are elements in some of the Masonic rituals that are reminiscent of motifs in the Rosicrucian manifestos. Later, as I shall mention, Rosicrucian themes came into Masonry again through other channels.

Going back to Germany, we find a sudden revival of Rosicrucianism during the early eighteenth century. But this revived Rosicrucianism was in many ways a very different phenomenon from the Rosicrucianism of the manifestos. What sparked off the revival was a book that appeared at Breslau in 1610 called *The True and Perfect Preparation of the Philosophical Stone of the Golden and Rosy Cross Brotherhood*. As we can tell from the title, this is basically an alchemical treatise, and here we have one of the major differences between this new Rosicrucianism and the earlier one. Alchemy is mentioned in the manifestos but does not play a central role, and the physical side of alchemy is played down. By the eighteenth century, alchemy—including practical laboratory alchemy—had become a major preoccupation of the Rosicrucian movement, and the Rosy Cross had become the Golden and Rosy Cross. The author, who called himself Sincerus Renatus, was in fact a Silesian Protestant pastor named Samuel Richter.

The fact that he came from Silesia in itself is interesting, because Silesia was an area with a long tradition of mysticism. It was the home of Jakob Böhme and the mystical poet Angelus Silesius. The other significant thing about Richter was that he was a member of the German religious movement called Pietism. This is highly important, because there is a close connection

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4. See Adam McLean's article on the "Garden of the Planets" at Edzell Castle in Angus, home of Sir David Lindsay, in *Hermetic Journal*, no. 4, summer 1979.

between Pietism and Rosicrucianism. Pietism was essentially an attempt to rediscover a purer and more authentic form of Christianity. It had its counterparts in, for example, Quakerism in England and Quietism in France. The Pietists emphasized feeling, personal virtue, and direct awareness of the divine rather than what they saw as the empty dogmatism and formalism of the mainstream churches.

There is a strong Gnostic streak in the Pietists. They were deeply influenced by mystical writers like Böhme and also by alchemy, which goes together with their Gnosticism, since alchemy is also rooted in the Gnostic tradition. The attempt to raise oneself up spiritually or the notion of spiritual rebirth was analogous to the alchemist's attempt to raise base matter to a higher state. The writings of the Pietists are full of alchemical images and metaphors. They speak of God as the great "Smelter," and they compare the divine spirit to a "holy tincture" or a "quintessence." Some of them believed that the Holy Trinity is actually present in the world of matter in the form of the three alchemical principles of salt, sulfur, and mercury. And many of them also actually practiced alchemy. One of the most famous Pietist writers of the eighteenth century, Friedrich Oetinger, wrote: "Chemistry and theology are for me not two things but one thing"—an idea from which modern science could learn much.<sup>5</sup> The poet Goethe had a Pietist friend named Fräulein von Klettenberg who stimulated him to experiment with alchemy, which was an important influence in his life and work.

Pietism, alchemy, and Rosicrucianism all come together in Samuel Richter's book *The True and Perfect Preparation of the Philosophical Stone of the Golden and Rosy Cross Brotherhood*. The alias Sincerus Renatus obviously refers to the notion of spiritual rebirth, and it may have been Richter's adopted name in the Golden and Rosy Cross order. Renatus gives us a number of details about this order. It had sixty-three members and an imperator elected for life. The brethren had a certain code for greeting each other. One was supposed to say, "Ave Frater," to which the other person would reply, "Rosae et Aureae." One then added the word *Crucis*. We don't know precisely when this Golden and Rosy Cross came into being—there are a number of other books and manuscripts of the early to mid-eighteenth century that describe it. Interestingly enough, however, the first reasonably solid

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5. Albert Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols. (Bonn, Adolph Marcus, 1880-86), vol.III, p.140.

piece of evidence is a document from 1761 that describes a Prague lodge of the order called the Lodge of the Black Rose and gives a list of members. Another important point is that, by that time, the Golden and Rosy Cross had become part of high-degree Freemasonry. To be admitted, one had to have passed through a regular Masonic lodge. And from now on we find various Masonic systems of one kind or another invoking the Rosicrucian symbology. It seems that Rosicrucianism may have entered Freemasonry at two different points in time. As mentioned earlier, it may have played a part in the actual origin of Masonry. Then it came in again during the eighteenth century with the Golden and Rosy Cross.

This Golden and Rosy Cross order is of key historical importance and enormously interesting in its own right. We know quite a lot about it—its tenets, its rituals, its organizational structure, and so on—partly from published exposés of the order and partly also from unpublished documents and correspondence between members, which have survived in various archives. Consequently, we also know the names of many of the members. Here, for the first time, is a Rosicrucian fraternity of which we have concrete proof and that we can describe in some detail. The order was a curious mixture of Freemasonry, alchemy, and a Pietistic, Gnostic type of Christianity, plus elements of the original Rosicrucianism.

The essential aim of the brotherhood, as described in one of its own documents, was “to make effective the hidden forces of nature, to release nature’s light, which has become deeply buried beneath the dross from the curse, and thereby to light within every brother a torch by whose bright light he will be able better to perceive the invisible God ... and thus become more closely united with the original source of light.”<sup>6</sup>

This passage is pure Gnosticism and refers to the dualistic idea of the divine spark imprisoned in the world of matter. The Golden and Rosy Cross was therefore essentially Gnostic in its philosophy. Alchemy played a major part in its activities, and alchemical symbolism featured in the initiation ceremonies. Members were also supposed to have their own laboratories and work diligently at their furnaces and retorts and crucibles. There survive today many alchemical manuscripts that circulated among the fraternity, and as one progressed up the order one supposedly received more and more

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6. *Eingang zur ersten Classe des preisswürdigsten Ordens vom Goldenen Rosen Creutze nach der letzten Haupt- und Reformations-Convention* (reproduced in J. J. Bode’s *Starke Erweise*, 1788).

alchemical secrets, some of which sound quite improbable. One leading member, for example, is recorded as having written to another member, telling him quite solemnly that when he reached the eighth degree he would have the ability to hatch chickens out of hard-boiled eggs. When I read something like that I feel that the Golden and Rosy Cross took itself somewhat too seriously—it lacked the *homo ludens*, the playful element.

The order was grouped into circles of nine members each and had nine grades of initiation. In ascending order, these were as follows: Junior, Theoreticus, Practicus, Philosophus, Minor, Major, Adeptus, Exemptus, Magus. This grade structure, slightly modified and extended to ten grades, was adopted by the English occult order the Golden Dawn and later by other Rosicrucian orders. The order was highly hierarchical and secretive. Ordinary members did not know the names of those higher up, beyond the level of their own circle. The command structure had various levels. There were circle directors, there were regional directors in charge of several circles, there was a Grand Priory, and right at the very top, there were the so-called Unknown Superiors, probably three in number, who were the ultimate authority—rather like the “Secret Chiefs” of the Golden Dawn, except that the Unknown Superiors were real people, and there is some evidence as to who they were. One of them may have been a physician at Sulzbach in Bavaria called Schleiss von Löwenfeld, who also wrote a book defending the Golden and Rosy Cross.

By the 1770s the Golden and Rosy Cross was well established all over central Europe, with centers in places such as Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt am Main, Regensburg, Munich, Vienna, and Prague. There were also centers further east—in Poland, Hungary and Russia. In what is now the Czech Republic there was a center at the castle of Rajec near Brno, the home of Prince Salm-Reifferscheidt, which has been written about by a historian at the University of Brno, Dr. Jiri Kroupa.<sup>7</sup> Salm-Reifferscheidt, whose library still exists in the castle, was evidently a remarkable figure, a sort of Renaissance man of learning whose interests encompassed the world of the French Enlightenment *philosophes*, the world of modern science, and the world of alchemy and spiritualism. He gathered about him, as members of his Rosicrucian circle, a highly eclectic group of individuals—philosophers, chemists, metallurgists. According to Dr. Kroupa, this group played a significant role in

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7. Jiri Kroupa, *Alchymie Stesti*. Brno: Muzeum Kromerizska/Muzeum a Vlastivedna Spolecnost, 1987.

establishing an organized scientific community in Moravia. It was a circle of people, very much in the spirit of the original Rosicrucians of a century earlier—a sort of invisible college pursuing a universal vision of knowledge at the cutting edge, as they saw it, of scientific research and, at the same time, rooted in the older inner traditions of alchemy and theosophy. And we must not forget that someone like Prince Salm-Reifferscheidt would have known the original Rosicrucian manifestos intimately and may very well have been working quite consciously to create a Rosicrucian invisible college in line with the vision of Andreae and his circle a century and a half earlier.

The Russian branch of the order also had some remarkable members, notably the writer and publisher Nikolai Novikov (1744–1818). Novikov and another Russian Rosicrucian, I. V. Lopuchin, ran a publishing house called the Typographical Society, which made available to the Russian public for the first time, in Russian, the works of foreign mystical writers, such as Jakob Böhme, Angelus Silesius, Louis Saint-Martin, the French Quietist writer Madame Guyon, and the English mystic John Pordage. Novikov is a major figure in Russian history and an interesting example of someone who was a supporter of the progressive ideals of the Enlightenment but also deeply influenced by esoteric traditions. He believed that, since human beings all contain a divine spark, everyone should be treated with respect, regardless of their social origins. And he and his fellow Rosicrucians in Moscow practiced what they preached by running various charitable institutions, such as a hospital and an apothecary's shop for the poor. Here again we have a group of people working in the spirit of the original manifestos. Unfortunately, Novikov fell afoul of Catherine the Great, who was opposed to Freemasonry; she had him thrown into prison, but he was released four years later when her son came to the throne after she had died.

The Golden and Rosy Cross reached the height of its influence in Prussia, where one of its members was Frederick the Great's nephew, who became king of Prussia as Frederick William II in 1786, when his uncle died. During most of Frederick William's reign the court and government were dominated by a Rosicrucian clique led by the king's two Rosicrucian mentors, Johann Christof Wöllner and Johann Rudolf von Bischoffswerder. These people have been given a very bad image by historians, mainly because of the way in which they attempted to use their influence over the king to tighten religious orthodoxy in Prussia through censorship and by attempts to force preachers to toe the line. In short, the Golden and Rosy Cross is seen by

many historians as an anti-Enlightenment force. This view is reinforced by the fact that certain members of the Golden and Rosy Cross played a leading part in the campaign against the Illuminati of Bavaria, an ultraradical, revolutionary group led by Adam Weishaupt (1748–1830).

I will not go into all the arguments about whether the Golden and Rosy Cross was anti-Enlightenment, since I discussed it in my book, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason*.<sup>8</sup> Briefly, its members were generally opposed to what they saw as the arrogant rationalism of the Enlightenment. Some of them, for example, opposed the medicine of the time because they saw that medicine was becoming mechanistic and losing sight of the connection between spirit and body; they attacked it for the same reason that the holistic movement attacks the orthodox medicine of today.

The Golden and Rosy Cross essentially came to an end after the death of King Frederick William II in 1797, by which time it was already falling apart because of internal disputes and adverse publicity. It is also worth mentioning an offshoot called the Asiatic Brethren, which was unique for its time in that it had a mixed Jewish and Christian membership, and the rituals and symbolism of the order had a strong Jewish element. The Asiatic Brethren, in turn, had an offshoot in the form of a Masonic lodge at Frankfurt of mixed Jewish and Christian membership, called the Lodge of the Rising Dawn. It is thought that this may have been the antecedent of the name Golden Dawn.

The Golden and Rosy Cross and its various offshoots had important repercussions. For example, we can find Rosicrucian influences in the Romantic movement, which began at about the end of the eighteenth century. Like the Golden and Rosy Cross, it was a reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment. We find Romantic writers such as Novalis and Romantic painters such as Friedrich Otto Runge using Rosicrucian and alchemical motifs.

There is also a very strong possibility that homeopathic medicine came out of Rosicrucianism. The inventor of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann, lived from 1755 to 1843. Unfortunately, we know very little about his life, but we do know that he was a Freemason. Given his obvious interest in alchemy, it seems highly likely that he was also a member of the Golden and Rosy Cross. The basic principle of homeopathy—the idea that like cures like—did not come out of blue. It developed out of the alchemical tradition,

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8. Christopher McIntosh, *The Rose Cross and the Age of Reason: Eighteenth-Century Rosicrucianism in Central Europe and Its Relationship to the Enlightenment*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997.

and a very similar theory had already been expressed much earlier by Paracelsus. Certainly homeopathy, in its holistic character, is very much in keeping with the spirit of Rosicrucianism. Consequently, though it is difficult to prove, I believe that homeopathy is part of the Rosicrucian legacy.

Moving across the Atlantic, we find that Rosicrucianism took root there as early as the 1690s with a group of German Pietists who emigrated to Pennsylvania, taking with them an early version of a Rosicrucian work called *The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians*, which was not published until a century later. One group of these Pietists had a kind of monastic community at Ephrata in Pennsylvania, which is still preserved as a museum.

An important name in nineteenth-century America is Paschal Beverly Randolph, a remarkable character who was probably partly of African blood. He was an activist for black liberation, a spiritualist, and an early advocate of the use of sexual techniques for enhancing health and raising consciousness. Randolph called himself a Rosicrucian, although he admitted that nearly everything he gave out as Rosicrucianism came from his own mind. Nevertheless, he started a Rosicrucian movement, whose offshoots are still active today. I shall return shortly to other Rosicrucian movements in the United States.

Moving to France, we find a colorful Rosicrucian revival taking place in the late nineteenth century under the leadership of two eccentric characters, the poet Stanislas de Guaita and the novelist and occultist Joséphin Péladan, or Sar Péladan, as he called himself. These two founded an order called the Kabalistic Order of the Rose Cross, but they soon quarreled, and Péladan left to set up his own order, the Order of the Catholic Rose Cross, the Temple, and the Grail. This was much more than an occult order. It was also an artistic and cultural organization. It had a theatre where it put on plays dealing with mystical and esoteric themes. It ran a series of annual art exhibitions—the Salons des Rose Croix—which exhibited the works of some quite well-known names in the French Symbolist movement, among them, Gustave Moreau. It had an orchestra, for which much of the music was written by Erik Satie. This orchestra also did a great deal to promote the music of Wagner in France. Thus, Péladan's order had a seminal influence in many spheres. When he died in 1918, his torch passed to a Belgian disciple, Émile Dantinne, who called himself Sar Hiéronymus. He founded an order called the Rose-Croix Universelle and collaborated with the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) in founding an international federation of occult societies, the Fédération Universelle des Ordres et Sociétés Initiatiques (FUDOSI). It was



this organization that propagated the idea that ancient Egypt was the real source of Rosicrucianism, and thus we find a new emphasis on Egyptian themes in an order like AMORC.

At about the same time that the Rosicrucian revival was happening in France and Belgium, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was set up in England by two English occultists, William Wynn Westcott and MacGregor Mathers, using, as mentioned earlier, what was basically the grade structure of the Golden and Rosy Cross. The Golden Dawn was a brilliant synthesis of many different systems—cabala, alchemy, astrology, tarot, and elements of Eastern mysticism. It consisted, in fact, of two orders—an outer and an inner order; it was the inner one that was Rosicrucian. One was admitted to it by going through the “Adeptus Minor” initiation ceremony, which was an extremely dramatic and colorful reenactment of the discovery of the vault of Christian Rosenkreutz. At the climax, a person playing the part of Christian Rosenkreutz would arise from the coffin before the eyes of the initiate.

The Golden Dawn is an important part of the Rosicrucian legacy, as one realizes when one looks at the list of names of the members. There was Evelyn Underhill, the writer on mysticism; W. B. Yeats, whose poetry was profoundly influenced by his experience in the Golden Dawn; and the novelist Charles Williams, who was a member of an offshoot of the order headed by A. E. Waite. Williams wrote a series of remarkable occult novels clearly influenced by his Golden Dawn experience—especially one called *The Greater Trumps*, which is based on the symbolism of the tarot. Waite himself wrote classic works on Rosicrucianism and other aspects of the esoteric tradition.

The literary heritage of Rosicrucianism is a vast subject, but I should mention a few other names, including novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton, whose *Zanoni* is explicitly based on Rosicrucian themes. It starts off with a young man going into an antiquarian book shop in London and getting into conversation with an old gentleman about the Rosicrucians:

“The Rosicrucians!” repeated the old gentleman, and in his turn he surveyed me with deliberate surprise. “Who but a Rosicrucian could explain the Rosicrucian mysteries! And can you imagine that any member of that sect, the most jealous of all secret societies, could themselves lift the veil that hides the Isis of their wisdom from the world?”<sup>9</sup>

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9. Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni: A Rosicrucian Tale*. Blauvelt, NY: Garber Comm., p. 9.

Another name that can be mentioned is the German poet Stefan George. He wrote, in a poem called *Templars*:

Once in a Golden Age we merged with all,  
For aeons now the crowd has shunned our call.  
We are the Rose: the young and fervent heart,  
The Cross: to suffer proudly is our art.

The interesting point about George is that he was the leader of a circle of disciples who called themselves "Secret Germany." Their aim was to bring about a spiritual renewal in Germany. One of their members, Klaus von Stauffenberg, led the plot against Hitler in 1944. This is written up in a book by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh called *Secret Germany*.<sup>10</sup> Again, we cannot categorically say that George was a Rosicrucian, but we can say that his circle was working in the Rosicrucian spirit.

Coming to the present day, we find an enormous number of offshoots of Rosicrucianism all over the world—AMORC, the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, based in California, with a very large international membership; the Builders of the Adytum, based on the writings of Paul Foster Case; the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis, founded by Swinburne Clymer, with antecedents going back to Paschal Beverly Randolph; the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, based in the Netherlands but again with an international membership. There is also Freemasonry, with its various Rosicrucian elements—for example, the Ancient and Accepted (or Scottish) Rite of Freemasonry, whose eighteenth degree is called the Rose Croix degree. I should also mention anthroposophy, whose founder, Rudolf Steiner, was profoundly influenced by Rosicrucianism and, indeed, saw the anthroposophical movement as carrying on the work of Christian Rosenkreutz. Again, anthroposophy has clearly had an enormous influence through its schools, its biodynamic agriculture, and so on.

Quite apart from explicitly Rosicrucian movements, we also find Rosicrucian influences in places where they are not so obvious. A stream of Rosicrucian thinking was transmitted, as we have seen, by Comenius. He is often seen as the forefather of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) because of the way he linked education with the idea of international cooperation, the exchange of knowledge across borders.

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10. *Secret Germany: Claus Von Stauffenberg and the Mystical Crusade*. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

Looking at these various aspects of the Rosicrucian legacy, I think we can say that the Rosicrucian current is transmitted at various levels. It is transmitted by organizations that specifically call themselves Rosicrucian—I have given many examples of these. It is also transmitted by people who invoke the symbology and ideas without necessarily calling themselves Rosicrucians. And, I would argue, it is even transmitted by people and by organizations who are unaware of what they are transmitting. We can speculate endlessly about whether there really is something like Borges's *Orbis Tertius* brotherhood, or whether there are superior beings on the inner plane who are making all this happen, or whether perhaps it comes about through the workings of the collective unconscious, as Jung would probably say. The fact is that there is a tradition that has been transmitted down to the present day.

Looking back over the history of Rosicrucianism, I would like to pose this question: How successful has the Rosicrucian enterprise been? I think we can say partly successful. I say "partly" because I would argue that, in the early seventeenth century, a historic opportunity was missed. Had Prince Frederick prevailed at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, things might have turned out very differently. As it was, the Rosicrucian vision of a new age was not realized. Religious conflicts deepened. Religion and science drifted further apart. Knowledge became more and more fragmented. The Rosicrucian stream itself split into different currents.

Today we stand at a point in time that has many parallels with the era of the manifestos. There is a similar feeling that the world has gone wrong, that an age is ending, and the hope that a new one will soon begin. In a sense, we are facing a new Battle of the White Mountain. Only this time it is not against the forces of the Hapsburgs but against those who uphold a fragmented approach to human knowledge, an impoverished vision of humanity, a despiritualized science, a dehumanized medicine, a divisive economic and political system, an exploitative approach to the environment. If we are to combat these things we need to regain the holistic, universal vision that we find in Rosicrucianism. Finally, we come back to that story by Borges—"A scattered dynasty of solitary men has changed the face of the world. Their task continues." In other words, *our* task continues.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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PAUL BEMBRIDGE lives in Yorkshire, U.K., and works as a university lecturer specializing in Elizabethan and 17th century poetry. He has a lifelong interest in the Western esoteric tradition and was recently elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts for his controversial work identifying Andrew Marvell as a Rosicrucian poet. He has been a summer conference presenter for the New York Open Center for several years and is currently working on the hermetic underpinnings of Elizabethan poetry. Previously the author of reviews and articles (e.g., on seventeenth-century astrology) he is now offering, in the chapter he has contributed for this volume, his first extended study within his chosen field.

CLARE GOODRICK-CLARKE works in subtle energy medicine using reflexology and homeopathy. She is a poet, artist, and writer inspired by alchemy and Gnosticism. Her scholarly interests include the Platonic tradition in the English Renaissance and its influence on the Reformation. In addition to her work on Rosicrucianism, she has also lectured on Gnosticism at the Temenos Academy.

NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE lectures and writes on Renaissance magic, German mysticism and Paracelsian medicine. Widely traveled in Central Europe since the 1970s, he recently led a tour of Bohemia relating to John Dee and Edward Kelley. He is series editor of the "Essential Readings" series, including volumes on John Dee, Jacob Boehme, Robert Fludd, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Rudolf Steiner, and he is the author of *Paracelsus*, a study of the life and thought of the sixteenth-century magus. He has examined the fascist-esoteric connection in *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and Their Influence on Nazi Ideology* (New York University Press, 1992) and *Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth and Neo-Nazism* (New York University Press, 1998). A full-time author, he lives with Clare at a farmhouse on the Berkshire Downs in England.

JOSCELYN GODWIN was born in England and educated at Radley and at Magdelene College, Cambridge. He moved to the United States in 1966 to study at Cornell university (Ph.D. in Musicology). Since 1971, he has taught at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. He has authored, edited, or translated twenty-four books on musical and esoteric subjects, of which the most recent is the first complete English translation of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499) by Francesco Colonna, published by Thames & Hudson.

JOHN MATTHEWS has made a thirty-year study of the literature of the Arthurian legends and has published more than fifty titles on this and related subjects. His most popular works are: *The Grail: Quest for Eternal Life* (1981); *King Arthur and the Grail Quest* (1997); and *The Arthurian Tradition* (1995). He also edited and introduced an Arthurian collection for Lindisfarne Books entitled *Sources of the Grail* (1997). He is an active member of the International Arthurian Society and is currently editing a special issue of the journal *Arthuriana* on modern and postmodern Arthurian literature. Much in demand as a lecturer, he travels widely to the United States and throughout Europe. He has made a number of television appearances on the Discovery and History channels. He has just published a large-format book on the lives of the Celtic saints, *Drinking from the Sacred Well* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). He currently lives in Oxford, England with his wife, the writer Caitlín Matthews and their son Emrys.

CHRISTOPHER MCINTOSH was born in England in 1943 and grew up in Edinburgh, Scotland. He received a degree in philosophy, politics, and economics from Oxford and another in German from London University. Later he returned to Oxford for his doctorate, writing his thesis on the "Golden and Rosy Cross Order of the Eighteenth Century." As a writer, he has specialized in the Western esoteric traditions. He has written books on astrology, the Rosicrucians, and the French magician Eliphas Lévi, as well as a biography of King Ludwig II of Bavaria. He worked as a journalist and editor in London, spent four years in New York with the United Nations Development Program, and now lives in Hamburg, Germany, where he works for a research institute of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He is currently working on a book on sacred and symbolic gardens of various cultures and eras.

ROBERT A. POWELL graduated with a master's degree in mathematics from the University of Sussex, England. While researching the history of the ancient science of the stars during the 1970s, he discovered the works of Rudolf Steiner. He was also led to the work of the German-born astrophysicist Willi Sucher and the Russian-born Catholic hermetic Sophiologist Valentin Tomberg. Continuing his research in Germany and Switzerland, Robert Powell completed eurythmy training at the Goetheanum in Dornach. He has lived and worked as a eurythmist and movement therapist at the Sophia Foundation in Kinsau, Germany, where he gives yearly intensive courses on cosmic and sacred dance. He lectures and gives workshops in association with Sophia groups around the world. In addition to the yearly *Christian Star Calendar* (together with Michael Brinch), published by SunCross Press, Robert Powell is author of *The Most Holy Trinosophia; Divine Sophia: Holy Wisdom*, and other works, including the six-tape set "The Sophia Teachings." His research into the life of Christ led to the publication of *Chronicle of the Living Christ: The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ* (Anthroposophic Press). A companion volume to this work, *Christian Hermetic Astrology: The Star of the Magi and the Life of Christ* (Anthroposophic Press, 1998) concludes the *Hermetic Astrology* trilogy. His latest book is *The Christ Mystery: Reflections on the Second Coming*. Robert Powell is cofounder of the Sophia Foundation of North America, P.O. Box 712, Nicasio, CA 94946.

RAFAŁ T. PRINKE was born in 1955. He received his M.A. in philology and is now senior lecturer in computing at University School of Physical Culture in Poznan, Poland. He is completing his Ph.D. in history on computer analysis of historical sources. He has authored six books (in Polish) and many articles on occult subjects. Some of his writings have been published in English, mostly in *The Hermetic Journal*, on genealogy and on electronic texts in the humanities. He has translated several books into Polish, including Benjamin Hoff's *The Tao of Pooh* and *The Te of Piglet*. Rafał Prinke currently maintains a website devoted to his varied interests at <http://hum.amu.edu.pl/~rafalp>. He lives in Poznan, Poland, with his wife and two sons, the older of whom is named after Michael Sendivogius.



*The beginning of this Divine Science is the fear of the Lord and its end is charity and love toward our Neighbour; the all-satisfying Golden Crop is properly devoted to the rearing and endowing of temples and hospices; for whatsoever the Almighty freely bestoweth on us, we should properly offer again to him. So also Countries grievously oppressed may be set free; prisoners unduly held captive may be released, and souls almost starved may be relieved.*

— Jean d'Espagnet,  
*The secret work of the hermetic philosophy*, 1623

*[Johann Valentin] Andreae and his friends felt that the time was ripe for a new age. European civilization had reached a critical point. The Reformation had failed to bring about the spiritual renewal that had been hoped for, Europe was bitterly divided into Catholic and Protestant camps, science and religion were drifting apart—it was obvious that something had gone wrong. So Andreae and his friends decided to express their vision for Europe in the form of an imaginary brotherhood, which they hoped would in due course attract people and so turn into a real brotherhood.*

—Christopher McIntosh

Early in the seventeenth century, a series of manifestos and other writings began to circulate across Europe. They announced the dawn of a “new age” and proclaimed a universal reform of science, religion, and society. The authors were members of an “invisible college” and confessed themselves disciples of “Christian Rosenkreutz.” They called upon all the learned and the pious to participate in the new Rosicrucian enlightenment. The movement went underground during the Thirty Years’ War, and it lives on today as a vital component in contemporary spiritual movements. For this reason, in 1995 and 1997, the New York Open Center (in association with *Gnosis* magazine and Obibio in Amsterdam), invited leading esotericists and scholars of Alchemy, Rosicrucianism, and the Western Mystery Traditions to the Czech Republic to discuss the historical background and future possibilities of the Mystery of the Rose Cross. This volume presents their findings:

- ❖ JOHN MATTHEWS *reveals the mystical relationship between the Grail and the Rose*
- ❖ CHRISTOPHER BAMFORD *addresses the prehistory of the Rosicrucian reformation in the late Middle Ages—the women mystics, alchemists, Cathars, Franciscan spirituals, as well as Luther and the great Paracelsus*
- ❖ NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE *tells the wild tale of John Dee’s mission in central Europe*
- ❖ JOSCELYN GODWIN *unfolds the paradigmatic Rosicrucian life of Michael Maier*
- ❖ ROBERT POWELL *speaks of the Prague Hermetic Renaissance in relation to Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, and Rudolf II*
- ❖ RAFAŁ PRINKE *tells of the Polish alchemist, Sendivogius*
- ❖ CLARE GOODRICK-CLARKE *conveys the influence of Comenius*
- ❖ PAUL BEMBRIDGE *tells of the Rosicrucian resurgence at the Court of Cromwell*
- ❖ CHRISTOPHER MCINTOSH *recounts the legacy of the Rosicrucians, placing it in the context of the history of Western esotericism and world events*
- ❖ *Also included are two Rosicrucian manifestos, the Fama and the Confessio*

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